WOMEN'S POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN PALESTINE

PEACEBUILDING, RESISTANCE, AND SURVIVAL

SOPHIE RICHTER-DEVROE

Women's Political Activism in Palestine

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Cover illustration: A Palestinian woman and her child walk past a large painting declaring Palestinian revolution on the controversial Israeli separation barrier in Bethlehem, West Bank, 2012. (UPI/Debbie Hill)

To my mother

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Note on Transliteration and List of Arabic Terms

I use the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) transliteration system for Arabic in this book, except for names of people (e.g., Ilham) and places (e.g., Ramallah) or other idioms (e.g., Nakba, Intifada) known in the English language. The IJMES system is commonly used for written texts, while ethnographic work, like mine, tends to rely on transliteration systems that try to reflect the spoken Arabic of interviewees. I decided to adopt the IJMES system nevertheless, based on two considerations. First, I do not cite extensively in transliteration from my interviewees, but rely on Arabic terms (in transliteration) only where I find an engagement with the different meanings of a specific term important. In these cases, the discussion revolves around the meanings and usages of a concept, whether written or spoken, rather than phonetics. Second, the Arabic dialect spoken by my interviewees varied widely depending on generation, rural or urban background, and their local residence in Palestine. It would have been difficult to establish a uniform transliteration system for these different dialects. I provide a list of Arabic terms used in the text, and translations, below.

amal	hope
ʿamal	work, effort
ʾarḍ	land

aṣāṣ	foundation
barāmij al-ḥiwār	people-to-people / dialogue programs
ᶜeib	shame(ful)
fidā'ī	freedom fighter
filasṭīn	Palestine
ḥal aṣ-ṣiraᶜ	conflict resolution
istislām	surrender
jamᶜīyya	small cooperative, association, club, or society
lā ᶜunf	nonviolence
lajna (pl. *lijān*) *shaᶜbīyya*	popular committee(s)
muqāwama	resistance
muqāwama lā ᶜunfīyya	(principled) nonviolent resistance
muqāwama shaᶜbīyya	civil or popular (largely nonviolent) resistance
niḍāl	struggle
qūwā	power, strength
salām	peace
ṣāmida	steadfast (woman)
shaᶜbī	popular
ṣumūd	steadfastness
ṣumūd muqāwam	resistance steadfastness
taghyīr al-jaww	change of scenery
taṭbīᶜ	normalization
taḥrīb	crossing the 1967 border without an Israeli permit
tawjīhī	Palestinian high school diploma (equivalent to A levels)
waṭan	nation/homeland

Abbreviations

AEI	Arab Educational Institute
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
EU	European Union
GPAAWC	Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign
GUPW	General Union of Palestinian Women
HLT	Holy Land Trust
ISM	International Solidarity Movement
IWC	International Women's Commission
IWPS	International Women's Peace Service
JCW	Jerusalem Center for Women
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PA	Palestinian Authority
PACBI	Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel
PCFF	Parents Circle—Families Forum
PDFLP	Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PRIME	Palestinian Research Centre in the Middle East

PWWSD	Palestinian Women Working Society for Development
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UN	United Nations
UNLU	Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (First Intifada)
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSG	United Nations Secretary General
UPWC	Union of Palestinian Women's Committees
UPWWC	Union of Palestinian Women's Working Committees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WPS	women, peace, and security (see p. 9)

Women's Political Activism in Palestine

Introduction

From Revolutionary Activism to Informal Politics

> Palestinian women tend to be portrayed as victims of the occupation, patriarchal society, history, etc.—and it is true that these things could have easily victimized women. But . . . these women are not victims—they are survivors, they are powerful and continue every day to find different forms of resistance to survive. . . . This form of more indirect national resistance is very important and needs to be recognized as such. Women need to be reminded that their work, their everyday resistance, is important and an integral part of Palestinian resistance. They need to be proud of that and need to be strengthened. (Najla int., Bethlehem, 2007)

> The wall is standing, and the occupation is continuing, and the Palestinian woman is the foundation (*al-aṣās̱*); she is the land (*al-'arḍ*); she is the one who has to preserve; she is the one who has to build the future. . . . Women don't necessarily have to fight the wall directly, they have to bring up and raise a generation. (Lama int., Ramallah, 2008)

During the many hours I spent discussing the situation in Palestine with Najla and Lama, one issue always stood out: that the ways in which women do politics in this context of prolonged occupation, settler colonialism, and violence remain largely unrecognized, because they are not what we might expect them to be.[1] Both women have lived all their lives in the West Bank,

but their pasts and presents differ: Lama was raised in Askar Refugee Camp near Nablus and now lives in Ramallah with her four boys, while Najla grew up in a small village near Bethlehem and now works in Ramallah. Although diverging, their life experiences and everyday struggles taught them—and me—one important lesson: that there is more to politics than high-level, male-dominated diplomacy, peace negotiations, and political party politics, or even voting and union activism. During our long drives in cramped minibuses through the West Bank trying to cross checkpoints and circumventing settler roads, or while feeding children, putting them to sleep or cooking under curfew, women like Najla and Lama taught me—through both their narratives and everyday practices—that women's politics in Occupied Palestine go beyond conventional political engagements and take place largely on an informal, individual, and everyday level. Understanding Palestinian women's forms of political agency and resistance against the Israeli occupation thus requires a shift in scholarly focus to the everyday.

The need to refocus and rethink what "doing politics" really means in Palestine seems even more urgent today. Over the last years, the Israeli occupation has tightened its grip on Palestinian everyday life, settler-colonial violence against Palestinians has risen, and the Palestinian political community is more fragmented than ever. Given this increasingly bleak outlook, many, if not most, Palestinians have lost hope in formal politics. For them, neither official "peace" negotiations nor liberationist, revolutionary activism offers promising solutions to unlock the status quo of political stagnation and paralysis in Palestine. Instead they simply try to get by and struggle, through quotidian, small-scale, informal efforts, to establish a livable environment for themselves and their loved ones.

The current way in which women practice informal politics in Palestine is part of a shift that has taken place over the last two decades. Since the Oslo Accords, the "peace agreement" signed by Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1993, and especially since the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000, Palestinians, including former activists, have increasingly moved away from formal politics. Female activists, for example, had contributed strongly to collective resistance activism during the First Intifada, the highly decentralized popular grassroots movement against the Israeli occupation that started in 1987 in the Occupied Territories.[2] But after the Oslo Accords and when official "state building" began, the PA did not integrate women leaders or their demands into its political agenda. Since then, women have had to be even more creative in finding ways to bear the devastating effects of the ever-tightening Israeli occupation

and settler-colonial policies on Palestinian everyday life. But, as Najla reminded me back in 2007 when we discussed her work with Palestinian women from different backgrounds in the West Bank, "these women are not victims—they are survivors, they are powerful and continue every day to find different forms of resistance to survive." Women confront the Israeli army when they try to access and tend their occupied lands, when they circumvent and sneak through the illegal Israeli apartheid wall into Jerusalem to sell their fruits and vegetables, when they defy mobility restrictions to travel with their family and friends in the West Bank, when they visit their imprisoned relatives, when they provide alternative schooling and childcare, when the army shuts down everyday life in Palestine, and, last but not least, when they do their best to provide—to the extent that this is possible—a normal life filled with hope and joy to their children, families, and friends.

These everyday informal politics tend to remain unrecognized in scholarly literature and, as Najla highlights, by society more generally. Sometimes women themselves do not acknowledge their own work. The strong decline in women's official collective political activism combined with the relative invisibility and marginalization of female informal politics has led some scholars to ask "where have all the women gone?" (Johnson and Kuttab 2001).[3] Others have looked for women's political activism elsewhere, studying, in particular, their increased involvement in the Islamic movement (Jad 2005; Al-Labadi 2008). Building on these scholars' search for the sites and qualities of women's politics in post-Oslo Palestine, I focus in this book on the mundane, the non-collective, the ordinary, and the everyday. Rather than being guided by larger categories, such as collective protest, party politics, or binaries between the religious and the secular or the public and the private, I hope to shed light on the messy and intricate dynamics of daily life in Occupied Palestine in order to trace the emergent politics that are practiced and articulated there.

Classic political analysis might consider the silent, ordinary acts that women practice on a daily basis uninteresting, or even irrelevant for political change. But the fact that women's everyday resistance is largely covert and hidden away from the public eye does not render it apolitical or without broader significance. The Israeli occupation and settler-colonial policies reach into and dominate the very fine grain of Palestinian everyday life. Consequently, the daily efforts of individuals, families, and communities to cope with and resist these constant violent intrusions cannot be

separated from broader political dynamics and goals (see also Taraki 2006; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009). Lama and Najla articulate these connections and intersections poignantly; they know all too well from their own daily lived experiences under occupation that "the personal is political." This feminist slogan, of course, is true for women (and men) all over the world, but it is particularly striking in contexts such as the Palestinian, where the occupation grinds away at the most intimate fabrics of ordinary life.[4]

In the precarious, unstable, and ambiguous post-Oslo and post-2000 context of "state building" under occupation, these informal, everyday "tactics" (Certeau 1984) of getting by and around the occupation, make up a large, if not the largest, part of Palestinian women's politics.[5] Such "tactics" are often individual, ad hoc, and predominantly aim for temporary, short-term gains. As such, they are "emblematic of the second intifada and [stand] in contrast to the first intifada, where action was premised on effecting profound and positive political change" (Johnson 2007, 603). Yet, when such small-scale, non-collective, dispersed actions—"nonmovements" as Asef Bayat terms them—accumulate over time, they can challenge the status quo through their "quiet encroachment" (Bayat 2010, 14) on broader hegemonic structures. Given the overwhelming and omnipresent control that Israel exercises over all aspects of Palestinian life, the everyday and the ordinary has today become a major site where politics takes place and is enacted in largely irregular, ad hoc, and immediate ways.

The goal of this book is to expose, analyze, and better understand these micro-level politics that occur locally, in largely unspectacular ways, and on an everyday basis. I focus on how Palestinian women do politics across a spectrum of activities and sites, tracing their different types of formal and informal political activism in peacebuilding (chapter 1), popular resistance (chapter 2), and everyday resistance and survival (chapter 3). In particular, I pay attention not only to what women *do* (i.e., their political practices), but also to the ways in which they themselves *understand* their actions and how they *present* or *represent* those actions in order to garner support. Women's political practices and the representations, meanings, and framings that women give to their politics are different from men's, and they also differ from conventional male-dominated politics. Studying women's alternative political expressions and their ways of doing politics thus sheds light not only on contemporary gendered political culture, but also on the forms, modes, and spaces of politics from below in Palestine, and the contemporary Middle East more broadly.

Historicizing Palestinian Women's Activism

The 2011 Arab uprisings not only shook Middle Eastern regimes but also functioned as a wake-up call for Middle East scholarship to rethink its classic preoccupation with elite politics, interrogate its underlying assumptions, and refocus its methodological and conceptual entry points.[6] With people pouring onto the streets in Egypt, Tunisia, and elsewhere, popular, contentious, and everyday politics could no longer be ignored. The fact that mainstream scholarship took its time to give serious attention to these politics from below, however, does not mean that they are new to the Middle East. Everyday, just as popular, resistance always existed (although perhaps to different degrees), and people from all strands of society have continuously been, and still are, involved in political struggles in all sorts of ways on a daily basis.

The Palestinian women's movement, for example, has a very long history, and has continuously relied on both collective formal activism and quotidian informal struggles.[7] In particular, less-privileged women, often of rural or refugee backgrounds, have always had to show a great capacity and creativity to find new ways to rebuild their destroyed community, mostly without, or with very little, macro-political structural support.[8] Be it refugee women's incredible resourcefulness to survive (and provide for family and community) during and after the Nakba, the Palestinian Catastrophe of 1948, or women's efforts to establish cooperatives and alternative schooling systems during the First Intifada, or today's peasant women's insistence to access their farmlands, Palestinian women's infrapolitics, although often invisible and unnoticed, are a constant and vital part of the Palestinian struggle. These women's experiences shed light on different modes and sites of political activism and can reveal alternative memories and histories "from below." As such, they constitute a needed and forceful counter-narrative to hegemonic Zionist historiography. And they can also complement, complicate, and challenge the homogeneity of hegemonic elite- and male-dominated Palestinian national or nationalist narratives.

The PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) period of the 1960s and '70s provides a good starting point to trace the very interesting and fundamental shifts that have taken place in gendered political culture in Palestine over the last decades.[9] The PLO's nationalist political culture of the '60s and '70s rested on two main pillars: armed struggle (*niḍāl*), and self-reliance and steadfastness (*ṣumūd*). Both political discourses were gendered: *al-fidā'īyya* (the female resistance fighter) functioned

as a symbol of liberation and modernity, while *aṣ-ṣāmida* (the steadfast woman, often mother of the *fidā'ī*) provided the traditional counterpart.[10] Yet, many Palestinians soon grew skeptical of both PLO political programs: the liberationist stance, which had not succeeded in bringing them any advances, as well as the *ṣumūd* agenda, which many considered a static, passive proposal, that might lead to political paralysis, prolong the occupation, and strengthen traditionalism and social conservatism (see Tamari 1991).

In response to the failure of both nationalist strategies to effectively combat the Israeli occupation, an alternative, progressive, and radical social movement started to form inside the Occupied Territories after the 1976 municipal elections. Dominated by leftist groups, this movement began to found mass organizations and popular committees and eventually culminated in the First Intifada, a grassroots movement that included women and men from all strata of society. The First Intifada was launched in 1987 in resistance to the Israeli occupation, but it must also be understood as giving expression to critiques voiced by a new generation of internal leaders against the PLO's political agenda, discourse, and culture, including its gendered aspects. Based on a strong network of popular committees, the First Intifada leadership (Unified National Leadership of the Uprising, or UNLU) established a system alternative to both the external PLO leadership and the Israeli occupation authorities, and proposed important conceptual and practical changes to Palestinian political culture. As a new popular movement and ideology, it offered alternative channels for women to redefine practices and discourses of political activism.

Although a variety of different forms of political activism continued to be practiced in this period, both formal and informal, the most fundamental shift pushed for and brought about by the First Intifada activists was one from the PLO's twin national resistance strategies, *ṣumūd* and *nidāl*, to mass-based popular resistance, *muqāwama shaʿbīyya*. Women played a crucial role in popular resistance, particularly through their active engagement in the Intifada's popular committees. Through their wide-reaching work in the Union of Palestinian Women's Working Committees (UPWWC) and their building of strong informal networks, women from all strata of society contributed to creating alternative, more plural and inclusive social, political, and economic systems, which were crucial in sustaining the First Intifada (Abdo 1994; Hiltermann 1993; Jad 1990, 2004b).[11] Many of my interviewees told heroic stories of women's

activism during the First Intifada. Leila, a prominent women's activist, well-known for her leadership in the First Intifada, for example, recounted that

> [w]omen risked their lives smuggling things from one part of the city to another, such as leaflets or the statements of the United Leadership of the Intifada. Women would say they are pregnant and put all the statements inside [their clothes] and act in front of the soldiers. . . . The soldiers never thought that women would do that. Many women went out on the street, and they saved children from being arrested whether they were theirs or others. Women took part in so many heroic actions, simple daily-life things. That really showed how women worked in the First Intifada. (Leila int. 2008)

Many others told me similar anecdotes of how women tricked the occupation authorities, how they defended Palestinian youths from Israeli soldiers by claiming the arrested youth to be their own child, and how they marched in the front rows of demonstrations and protests. The Intifada and the period that led up to it thus, without doubt, constituted a milestone in the Palestinian women's movement. It represents a high point, a "golden era for women's activism in the West Bank and Gaza" (Jad 2004b, 90), and has left a lasting feminist legacy among Palestinian women activists (Hasso 2001).

Yet women also faced gender-specific attacks during and particularly toward the end of the Uprising. Gendered politics of control, such as the association of women's dress, modesty, and chastity with morality and nationalist commitment, were used by different political factions, Islamic and secular. The fact that, for example, UNLU (and especially Fatah) responded only very late to attacks against female activists (what is known as the *ḥijāb* campaign) brings to light their attempt to form an alliance with the religious-political side against both the occupying forces and the leftist parties that had stronger women's branches (Hammami 1990). Women also never shared significantly in the UNLU leadership that, although acknowledging women's contribution to the national struggle, predominantly upheld the established nationalist-reductionist gender imagery of women as mothers, protectors, and nurturers rather than as independent political activists.[12]

Eventually, with the Oslo Agreements and the subsequent process of what is commonly referred to as state- and peacebuilding, many of the hopes that First Intifada female activists had harbored and fought for—for

example, to be represented in the new decision-making structures and to anchor their advances in actual legal changes—were shattered. The so-called peace process brought Palestinians neither economic or political independence and justice nor did it reward women's activists with actual political power.[13]

To the contrary: the PA, as a highly centralized and secured decision-making body dominated by male returnees, systematically attacked Palestinian civil society and consolidated patriarchal structures.[14] Many of my interviewees, both male and female, criticized the institutionalization of public patriarchy after Oslo. Leila expressed eloquently the frustration that many women leaders felt at the time:

> When Oslo came, we found out that we are not sharing in the decision making. There was only Hanan Ashrawi, and sometimes Zahira Kamal was mentioned. But that was all. We had a large number of women who were local and governorate leaders. They were well-known and they were very active. They were anti-occupation [activists], they fought with the soldiers with their bare hands—and still they were not recognized. In the legislative council elections, we had only five women in the first election, and as a minister we had only Hanan Ashrawi. We didn't become members of the executive committee of the PLO. (Leila int. 2008)

Despite such setbacks, women activists continued their struggles. They were, however, divided in their opinions on how to bring about change. Some opted for entering the PA, trying to effect change from within, others preferred to work independently on women's and feminist issues through (mainly foreign-funded) NGOs (Abdo 1994). Additionally to this divide between governmental and non-governmental actors, the post-Oslo Palestinian women's movement suffers from fragmentation along class, religious or secular, generational, as well as other lines. The PA has done little to counter this and has consistently failed to provide a unified and unifying national strategy for political action in Palestine.

In this disintegrating and increasingly individualized and informalized post-Oslo Palestinian political landscape, two meta-frames—peacebuilding and resistance—dominate and compete for popular legitimacy. Each finds backing from different supporters and relies on different discursive repertoires, including specific gender models, to broaden its ideational reach.

On the one hand, there is the mainstream international liberal agenda of peace- and state-building, what is also referred to among critics as "peace orthodoxy" (e.g., Pappé in Chomsky and Pappé 2014, 7). This agenda is embedded, conceptually and politically, within a liberal approach, and I refer to it in this book as liberal peace and liberal peacebuilding.[15] In its gendered dimension, it relies on two main femininity constructions, that of the professional "femocrat" (Jad 2004b, 25) and "peacewoman." Both are products of Oslo: "Femocrats" combine a feminist agenda for social gender change with working from within the bureaucratic and institutionalized structures of the PA; "peacewomen" benefit from similar institutional or project-based support but work specifically in peace and dialogue initiatives based on the gender construction of women as "peacemakers."

This liberal gender and peace discourse has received an additional boosting in 2000 with the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325), which called for women's participation in peacebuilding and their protection in conflict. I refer to it throughout this book as the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda. The WPS agenda is today upheld mainly by international organizations, few NGOs who support what is left of what is known as the "peace" process, and also by some components in the PA. Championing topics such as gender empowerment, nonviolence, peace, and dialogue, this largely urban-based, "NGO-ized" elite (see Jad 2004a; Hanafi and Tabar 2005) tends to rely on the discursive repertoire of tradition versus modernity, claiming to target and uplift poorer, refugee, and peasant women with the aim of "modernizing" them. Yet, they rarely succeed in broadly mobilizing women for their peacebuilding activities.

Instead, and opposed to the "peace orthodoxy," most Palestinians follow the resistance paradigm in their political narratives and actions. Resistance functions as the main mobilizing and legitimization frame for all political actors (even those involved in the "peace" process), but, with the decline of a unified leftist resistance, members of the Islamic movement now often (but not exclusively) present themselves as the last guardians of Palestinian resistance vis-à-vis the PA and nationalist-secular forces. In the women's movement, Islamic activists regularly adopt the gender imagery of female resistance activists, often reformulating it into an image of the modest, yet modern, new Islamic woman who combines piety with political activism (Jad 2005). Women in the Islamic movement, however,

are not the only ones: younger activists, both secular and religious, also use the resistance model in their attempts to challenge the status quo and loosen the older women leaders' grip on power. And peasant women, too, given their strong participation in the anti-wall demonstration in their villages, have risen as a symbol of female popular resistance over the last decade. Despite such continuation of women's protest politics, the post-2000 popular resistance scene in Palestine differs from the mass-based, centrally coordinated collective activism of the First Intifada. Overall, popular protests today lack a unified leadership and remain fragmented and irregular.

The disintegration of the Palestinian political landscape, the lack of national leadership, and a realization by activists that the variety of their political strategies—first and foremost the Oslo peace paradigm, but also *niḍāl* or *muqāwama shaᶜbīyya*—have achieved no tangible change on the ground, has fueled overall disillusionment with organized collective politics. It has prompted many to move toward ad hoc, spontaneous outbursts of popular resistance on the one hand, and more individualized, informal quotidian politics of survival and coping on the other. These everyday political engagements are increasingly grouped and framed by their actors under the meta-frame of everyday resistance and *ṣumūd*.

In this book I analyze the shifts, particularly toward informalization, that have taken place in all three of these forms of female political activism. Chapter 1 analyzes women's peacebuilding initiatives and tracks the ways in which UNSCR 1325 and the wider WPS agenda was interpreted and implemented in Palestine. After Oslo, donors but also some scholarly analysts have displayed a peculiar fascination with joint peacebuilding and dialogue initiatives (*barāmij al-ḥiwār*) between Israeli and Palestinian women. Such joint women-to-women peace initiatives often are legitimized with reference to the UNSCR 1325, but they have become few and lack social support and impact in the community. Countering celebratory stances that tend to reify women as "natural peacemakers," I argue in chapter 1 that joint Palestinian and Israeli women's peacebuilding in fact constitutes an attempt to *discipline* rather than to strengthen women's political activism in Palestine. Although people-to-people peacebuilding projects might be high on international donors' agendas, the large majority of Palestinians refuse to participate. Most consider them a mere marketing product, which is displayed, as one of my research participants aptly put it, on the shelves of the post-Oslo "peace supermarket." As such, joint peace projects are seen by most

Palestinians to be part and parcel of the conflict and political impasse in Palestine, not a solution to it.

Women's post-Oslo popular resistance activism (*muqāwama shaʿbīyya*) is the topic of chapter 2, where I trace the forms, meanings, and impacts of Palestinian women's involvement in the post-2000 anti-wall demonstrations. Literature on Palestinian popular resistance has proliferated recently,[16] but women's and/or gendered ways of engaging in protest, and the significance of women's contentious politics, remain largely understudied. Embodied protest actions, however, hold particular, gender-specific, meanings: by dramatically putting their bodies on the line, women not only resist the Israeli occupation but also challenge Palestinian nationalist discourses that reduce women to biological and cultural reproducers of the nation (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997), and counter the international agenda's disciplining project of confining Palestinian women's political spaces to that of joint peace initiatives with Israeli women. Instead, through their acts of radical protest, Palestinian women performatively enact new political subjectivities and thus also make, even if implicitly, gender-specific political claims.

Chapter 3 deals with the less spectacular, informal strategies of quotidian resistance and survival (*ṣumūd*). Although orthodox scholarship, but also women themselves and society more broadly, might often cast away women's everyday resistances as "apolitical" and not geared toward effecting political change, I argue that such micro agencies in fact *are* political and link to broader dynamics. More concretely, I show that women's everyday politics is crucial at one specific—the ideational—level. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009) has convincingly argued that Palestinian women are "frontliners," as they are both victimized by and resisting militarized violence. Women's performance as "frontliners" is not restricted to the realm of tangible physical violence (and resistance to it). They also play a frontliner role—perhaps more so than men—in combating Israeli violence (whether structural, physical, or psychological) at the nonmaterial and intangible, that is, at the ideational level. By striving to keep up hope, dignity, and a sense of a normal joyful life for themselves, their children, family, and community, women in Palestine resist, as I argue in chapter 3, the colonization of their minds.

It remains important to restate that everyday resistance and politics from below are not new phenomena in Palestine. They have always existed, although perhaps to different degrees and in different qualities. What is new, however, is a disillusionment among most Palestinians, men and women,

with the grand narratives of both liberal peace and national resistance. This has caused an increasing informalization of politics in Palestine, especially among women. The comparison to the First Intifada in this regard is telling: Each of the different forms of women's politics that will be traced in the subsequent chapters for the post-Oslo period—peacebuilding, popular resistance, and everyday survival politics—has, of course, also existed during the First Intifada. But at that time, politics across these three fields was more collective and more centrally coordinated. As I hope to show, the post-Oslo informalization of political practices in Palestine does not mean that today's more fragmented popular resistance or the more informal and often hidden coping strategies and acts of resistance that women practice on a daily basis are apolitical or ineffective. They are political because they take place within and against a settler-colonial system that attempts—at both material and ideational levels—to efface exactly that: the ability and creativity for people to manage, imagine, and live their own lives.

Theorizing Women's Activism in Palestine

At the end of a long meeting in his small NGO office in Bethlehem, Ghassan seemed disillusioned. A prominent Palestinian activist with a long history of engagement in different popular solidarity and resistance organizations and initiatives, he had, more recently, expended great efforts in reviving and coordinating the popular resistance scene in Palestine. For him, the liberal peace paradigm, much supported in international circles, had failed and needed to be abandoned:

> Anything now that has to do with peace is not really accepted in the community. [The concept/term "*salām*"] "peace" became very dull, very empty and shallow. It doesn't really have any meaning, because of the failure of the peace process. "Peace" is not giving people anything good. (Ghassan int. 2008)

The liberal peace paradigm materialized with the Oslo Agreements. It proposes peace negotiations and facilitative methods such as dialogue groups and problem-solving workshops to "resolve" conflict and build peace. Scholars adhering to this model stress, for example, that the secretly held negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian representatives played an important role in bringing about the historic handshake between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin in Washington, D.C., in 1993. They claim that the Oslo Accords and the "peace" process was a result not only of high-level peacemaking and diplomacy, but also of the less

official preparatory conflict resolution initiatives and problem-solving workshops, in which, they argue, identity-related frictions between the two conflict parties were overcome (see, e.g., Rothman 1997). As regards women's peace activism, the international community in a similar way encourages and puts much hope into dialogical conflict resolution initiatives between Palestinian and Israeli women.

Dialogical conflict resolution initiatives are rooted within a liberal approach to peace and politics. In particular, their focus on dialogue can find theoretical support from the notions of "ideal speech" or "discourse ethics"—both part of sociologist Jürgen Habermas's evolving liberal conceptualizations of the public sphere (Habermas 1984, 1987, 1989).[17] Habermas posits that, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an effective liberal bourgeois public sphere was created in Germany, France, and Britain where private individuals could come together, engaging in critical rational and reasoned public debate over key points of mutual interest without interference of either market or state, and generating and confirming norms and validity claims. Although Habermas acknowledges that reality is far from this vision, he clings to his normative goal, that rational deliberation and dialogue *should* be core for doing politics. More specifically, his focus on consensus building and norm creation through discursive deliberation and his later developed notions of ideal speech and discourse ethics persist as cornerstones throughout his works (see also Crossley and Roberts 2004), and have been used as a basis to analyze peacebuilding initiatives in Palestine (e.g., Jones 2000; Pfeil 2015).

But anchoring peacebuilding in liberal politics, and transposing Habermas's ideal speech theory to real-life situations of conflict or, in Palestine, occupation and settler colonialism can be highly problematic. Ghassan's statement reflects what most Palestinians think; they are highly disillusioned with the liberal peace project and consider it to be largely foreign-imposed and with little good, or even a destructive, effect on the ground. In particular, joint dialogue initiatives (*barāmij al-ḥiwār*) are viewed critically and rejected as a form of "normalization" (*taṭbīʿ*), that is, something that is normalizing, and thus prolonging, the abnormal situation of the occupation. Indeed, when discussing diverging meanings of peace, many of my interviewees distinguished between *salām* (peace) and *istislām* (surrender). Generally, they considered the hegemonic liberal dialogue and negotiations agenda with its technocratic aims of institution building, good governance, and democratization a form of *istislām*, that is, surrender to and prolongation of the status quo (the occupation), rather than real peace (*salām*).

When applied to real-life situations in Occupied Palestine, the shortcomings of the liberal dialogical peace model thus start to appear. Finding the roots of conflict in a "tragic misunderstanding" (Jones 2000, 657) and seeking to address this through dialogue, the liberal dialogical peace provides a wrong and simplified understanding of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict cannot be reduced to a "misunderstanding" and can also not be tackled through dialogue, communication, understanding, and empathy alone. Critical IR scholar Vivienne Jabri provides an insightful critique of the assumptions inherent in such liberal dialogical conflict resolution models:

> While reducing the complexity of international conflict to the dynamics of the inter-personal may have its attractions, it nevertheless has the effect of de-historicizing conflict, dislocating it from its specificities in time and place, the differential ways in which institutional practices enable some while constraining others. (Jabri 2006, 70–71)

With such dehistoricizing—and thus depoliticizing—tendencies, the liberal peace model not only ignores local context-specific political cultures but also marginalizes them. It is a power-laden, disciplining exercise aimed at rendering local epistemologies and practices of peace, politics, and resistance irrelevant and invalid.

Adnan, a local resistance leader and father of three in one of Ramallah's neighboring villages, has much experience with this. As both a former Fatah supporter and now a local popular resistance leader in his village, he is aware of the power dynamics that are at play. One day he summarized them succinctly to me:

> Every slave master wants some form of peace and harmony. He doesn't want his slaves to be rebellious and causing troubles. It is the same here. Israel does want some form of peace, but it wants to keep the power imbalance. It wants things to be calm and superficially happy—but it is careful to maintain its superiority. Real peace, however, is made between equals. The Israelis say they want peace, but it is their decision which peace to choose. They want to impose on us their peace and we have no choice. We cannot decide which form of peace. (Adnan int. 2008)

His telling metaphor richly illustrates that, although definitions and paths to peace are subjective and context dependent, it is the more powerful actors—in this case Israel and its international supporters—who can estab-

lish and impose their ways of conceptualizing and practicing peace—in this case the liberal peace agenda. Their paradigm of peace and peacemaking becomes normal and desirable and, as such, has the power to act as disciplining model, narrowing alternative spaces for other forms and modes of politics to emerge.[18]

This "peace of the powerful" and the political practices—dialogue and negotiations—associated with it, however, serve a particular agenda: the aim is to maintain the status quo, deflect attention from structural asymmetries between colonizer and colonized, present conflict as an interpersonal rather than structural (geo-)political issue, and propose negotiations, dialogue, and reconciliation to "solve" what is presented as a "tragic misunderstanding" (Jones 2000, 657).[19] Adhering to a "problem-solving approach," the liberal peace model uncritically attributes transformative agency to individual actors and often calls for people's, and in particular women's, *access to* rather than the *radical transformation of* established institutions, systems, and paradigms (see also Jabri 1996, 2006; Shepherd 2008; Väyrynen 2004). These very systems and paradigms (such as the PA-Israel negotiations, dialogue groups, or the two-state agenda), however, are often based on gender- (and other) discriminatory social and political structures; they are contributing (or at least prolonging) sources, not solutions to the conflict. The liberal peace model thus risks isolating individual and inter-personal agency and experience—especially that of bonding across the national divide—from the broader structural and material context of occupation and settler colonialism in which they take place.

It therefore should not come as a surprise that most Palestinians reject the liberal peace paradigm and instead call for *just* peace. Karima, a Christian woman from Bethlehem in her sixties whom I met several times throughout my fieldwork to talk with her about her long history of involvement in popular local politics, for example, was clear in her statement:

> [The Israelis] stole our land, our water, and our freedom. We cannot accept that. Give us our rights first. We want peace, but peace with justice. Peace is the fruit of justice. (Karima int. 2008)

Many stress, like her, that both equality between the Palestinian and Israeli sides and recognition of rights (such as the Palestinian right of return) are central parts of just peace; they are a precondition for, not a result of, reconciliation.[20] Karima's notion of real and just peace breaks

with the liberal peace orthodoxy: it no longer sacralizes dialogue, negotiations, and consent above all, but instead strives for redistribution and real structural changes on the ground. Just peace means ending the structural discrimination inherent in Israeli policies of settler colonialism, ethno-religious nationalism, and occupation. Adopting a position derived from a radical structuralist rather than from a liberal position, Palestinian activists like Karima call for resistance (*muqāwama*) rather than dialogue (*barāmij al-ḥiwār*) and conflict resolution (*ḥal aṣ-ṣiraᶜ*). They want to radically challenge and transform—rather than bracket—inequality, discrimination, and exploitation, and thus stress the need for direct actions to fight for justice and their rights.

Such demands resonate with feminist scholar Nancy Fraser's critiques of Habermas's liberal public sphere. Fraser's notion of post-liberal "subaltern counterpublics" (1992, 1995) describes spaces in which women practice nonconventional forms and modes of politics—not voting, not participating in political parties, not standing for political office. Palestinian women's participation in demonstrations, protests, and confrontations with the Israeli forces, or in informal—but nevertheless significant—political and social debates in women's circles at family or community level constitute such subaltern counterpublics. Through these unconventional politics women imagine and enact alternative political subjectivities, different from and challenging classic liberal notions of "the political." As shown throughout this book, Palestinian women's radical, popular, and collective, but also their silent, individual, and everyday forms of resistance provide a counter to mainstream liberal conceptualization of peace and politics. My conceptual engagement is focused in particular on Habermas's work (1984, 1987, 1989), which I take as a core example of how, in the liberal approach, the political is understood and conceptualized. In the chapters that follow, I trace how Palestinian women's politics challenge in particular four points of Habermas's work, all of which are emblematic of the wider liberal approach to politics: his notion of the public sphere as a singular, gender-neutral, and homogenous space; his ideal speech theory; his prioritization of discursive deliberation over embodied political practices; and his categorization of complex realities into rigid analytical binaries.

The actual politics that women practice on the ground in Palestine reveal real-life situations, where people do not have the luxury of striving for a far-removed liberal peace model and cannot act in an ideal

liberal public sphere. Rather, they operate in a web of quickly changing and highly unequal power structures. These power differentials are first of all political, between colonizer and colonized, but they are also, among other variables, gendered and classed. Palestinian women—as Palestinians, as women, as refugees or occupied quasi-citizens, as members of different social classes, different political parties, and different generations, and so on—create multiple and shifting "subaltern counterpublics" that help them maneuver through this matrix of control in varying and creative ways. Nancy Fraser's critical conceptualization of "subaltern counterpublics" (1992, 1995) and her structural-materialist focus on redistribution rather than recognition (1997) in this regard are important: they correct some of the liberal framework's shortcomings and help us get closer to where, why, and how women actually do politics in Palestine today.

Women's shifting political practices, discourses, and subjectivities (and particularly their move toward more informal ways of resistance) provide a rich entry point for rethinking the two main paradigms guiding post-Oslo politics, peace and resistance, but also conceptualizations of the political and the public sphere more broadly. My ethnographically grounded analysis starts there, from women's own often complex and ambiguous politics: how do the ways in which women actually do, experience, and narrate politics in Palestine force us to rethink the functioning, shapes, and boundaries of the polity?

Feminists have long called for a rethinking of classic notions of the political. They have stressed that "the personal is political," highlighting that so-called personal or private issues are in fact highly political. Questioning the false public/private dichotomy upheld in traditional political theory, including the Habermasian public sphere, they have called for an expanded definition of the political that would look beyond conventional, organized political actions, identifying also those spaces traditionally defined as outside of politics (e.g., the home), and analyzing the alternative, often informal and creative, modes of political expressions that particularly women engage in in their everyday spaces (see, e.g., Lasslett, Brenner, and Arat 1995; Butler and Scott 1992). Starting the analysis with an understanding that the personal is political, and therefore from women's own embodied practices and lived experiences of politics, requires situating them within the broader context in which they occur. Women (possibly more so than men) constantly need to negotiate their

political actions, but their actions, struggles, and advances might also affect and transform broader political contexts, cultures, and norms.

Studying the political cultures and subjectivities of women's politics from a gendered perspective thus is crucial to grasp the interplay between structure and agency: the ways in which women do politics are constituted by and constitute the structural context. Multiple material and ideational structures of oppression intersect in producing systems of domination that guide Palestinian women's actions: sociocultural oppression through different forms of male domination; economic oppression through market forces, aid dependency, and de-development; and political oppression through the Israeli occupation, settler colonialism, and ethno-nationalism, but also Palestinian nationalist discourse, political rivalries between secular and religious groups, and so on—all are intersecting sources of women's subordination through, with, and against which they are struggling and maneuvering.[21]

For women's politics, the ideational level is of particular importance: social gender norms and hierarchies guide how women *should*—and can—do politics. But norms depend on context and change in time and place. Conflict, violence, and occupation produce specific gendered norms and political cultures: in Palestine it is the resistance paradigm (in its various forms), not the liberal peace model, that dominates the normative level. A better gendered understanding of the Palestinian political cultures of resistance, its discourses and practices, including its constantly evolving gendered constructions (e.g., *al-fidā'īyya* and *aṣ-ṣāmida*) and forms of agency (e.g., *niḍāl, ṣumūd,* and *muqāwama shaʿbīyya*) is needed. Listening to and better understanding those that are cast as Other, that is, often non-liberal, non-secular, and non-professionalized constructions of femininities and masculinities as they evolve, are embodied and enacted in the Palestinian situation of prolonged occupation, settler colonialism, and violence, can help deconstruct the often self-referential and self-assertive logic of the mainstream liberal WPS agenda (see also Väyrynen 2004, 140). It can show how, where, and why such alternative political subjectivities, agencies, and cultures emerge.

Feminist scholarship highlights not only that conflict dynamics affect female political agencies and gender norms, but also that gendered dynamics underpin broader systems of violence, militarism, and conflict. Enloe (1989, 2000), for example, convincingly shows how normative constructions of femininity are in fact at the heart of the international political and economic system—the personal is not only political but also international. Militarized settings rely on masculinity constructions

of men as warriors and protectors and women as passive victims in need of protection, thus strengthening corresponding gender regimes and hierarchies by normalizing unequal economic, political, and social roles prescribed to men and women. Peace, in this understanding, would require a reformulation of the gendered discourses and norms—that is, of the political cultures—that perpetuate violence and discrimination. It requires unlearning, rethinking, and practicing anew gender roles and identities in society, politics, and culture.

This becomes particularly clear if women's gendered positionalities and perspectives are taken into account. In conflict zones, women's actual public political agencies often multiply and expand, but at the same time women face increased patriarchal control over their behavior, as social conservatism rises and gender constructions of "just warriors" versus "beautiful souls" become more strongly fixed and juxtaposed (Elshtain 1987; see also Al-Ali 2005). Essentialist gender imaginaries dominate nationalist discourses that reify women as bearers of cultural authenticity, as cultural and biological reproducers of the nation (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997), and as vessels not only of men's but the entire community's and the nation's honor (see, e.g., Al-Ali 2005; Al-Ali and Pratt 2009a, 2009b; Cockburn 2004). In Palestinian political culture, nationalist maternalist narratives that praise the steadfast mother (*aṣ-ṣāmida*) have been constant and are upheld not only by the leadership, but also by ordinary men and women at community and family level in different ways. Lama, in the second epigraph of this introduction, for example, essentializes women as "the foundation" [of the nation], as "the land," the "one who has to preserve [and] build the future." Yet, contrasted with Najla's statement, we are guided back from the level of discourse to women's actual political practices on the ground: women are not passive victims of such normative frameworks; they appropriate, reshape and make use of maternalist narratives to broaden their spaces for political agency. These appropriations tend to happen in a non-discursive, non-formalized, and non-collective way: women simply *do* politics and, in this process, transform political cultures in an often silent and nonconfrontational way. The body here plays a particular and significant role: it is through and with their bodies that women challenge narrow social and political norms and perform, embody, and enact alternative political subjectivities (Butler 1990/2006).

Female political subjectivities, forms of agency, and political cultures thus are constantly being remade. How women do politics in Palestine today is different from, for instance, the First Intifada, and it also does not

match neatly with conventional practices and classic conceptualizations of politics as we know them. Today's uncertainty and lack of a national unifying strategy in Palestine has given rise to a multiplicity of different forms, qualities, cultures, and sites of women's politics, including largely at the level of the everyday. Palestinian women's politics in post-Oslo and post-2000 Palestine tends to be informal, less visible, more ambiguous, and sometimes explicitly defined in opposition to Western feminist movements. This highlights the need to de-homogenize the category of "woman," and instead trace how gender, class, race, religion, nationality, generation, and other affiliations intersect to produce context-specific systems of oppressions, and consequently also context-specific, alternative, and unconventional—often non-secular and non-liberal—political cultures, subjectivities, and agencies. Both women's actual politics on the ground and feminist attempts at studying them challenge narrow liberal conceptualization of the public sphere and "the political." They highlight the need to rethink what "doing politics" means for women living under prolonged occupation and settler colonialism.

Methods and Politics of Researching Women's Activism

Researching Palestinian women's activism brings with it a set of challenges. Issues such as the researcher's own positionality, authorial voice, and privilege are particularly pertinent in contexts of political conflict and injustice. It was the following episode during my fieldwork, which I summarize below from my field diary, that made me think seriously about these questions:

> *"Iftakh! Iftakh!!"—The loud, aggressive voices of a group of young men, banging on the main metal door of our house ordering us in Arabic with a strong Hebrew accent to open the door, woke me with a start. This must be a bad joke, I thought, maybe some friends trying to play a silly trick on me and my housemates. But when suddenly floodlights lit up my room brightly, it started to dawn on me that this might really be the Israeli army raiding our house at 4 a.m. in the morning. I froze, and all sorts of questions ran through my mind: "Who are they looking for? Should I open the door? What if they start shooting?" But my main concern was to locate my passport. Just when I was getting out of bed in an attempt to reach it, my Palestinian housemate, Mahmoud,*

whispered through the door: "Sophie, this is the Israeli army. They are downstairs arresting the son of our neighbors. They have been around the house for the last two hours. Did you not hear them? Come and join me and Liana for a tea in my room. But don't make loud noise! We don't want to attract their attention."

Having grabbed my passport, I followed Mahmoud and joined their nightly tea circle. There we sat the next two hours whispering, sipping tea, and listening to what was happening outside.

We heard the Israeli soldiers ordering the whole family to line up on the wall outside the house, taking their details, forcing the family's son into their fortified military jeep and, once they had driven away with him, we heard his mother weeping in pain. We felt "besieged"; we were caught up inside, silently witnessing what was going on outside. At times I felt guilty and wondered whether, as a German passport holder, I should do more than just passively witness, whether I should perhaps make use of my privilege and interfere. Although we felt a strong sense of unity sitting there inside the besieged room together, I think, in the end, we each experienced the raid very differently. It was clear that, were we really to face the Israeli soldiers, it would entail drastically different consequences for each of us. When the next day a friend responded to my story about the nightly raid by mocking me—"so now, Sophie, you think this raid has turned you into a real filasṭīnīyya*, he?"—I remained certain that it hadn't.*

The experience of the raid made me reflect on my role as researcher in and on Occupied Palestine both during fieldwork and when writing up: What should be the role of an outsider like me—a non-*filasṭīnīyya*—when working in and on a context of injustice and severe power asymmetries? Should one act as neutral observer, as committed witness, or should one even interfere in situations of Israeli violations of Palestinian basic rights? How could or should we use our privileged position (in my case, as a German passport holder)? I do not provide conclusive answers to these questions here, but rather offer reflections, in line with other researchers, on issues crucial for my work in and for Palestine.[22]

The research in this book is based on a total of about eleven months' fieldwork, mainly in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, from 2007 to 2009.[23] With my base in Ramallah, I traveled regularly and widely in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. I often stayed for prolonged periods with families, particularly in towns and villages in the provinces of Tulkarm, Hebron, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. I conducted eighty-four

qualitative semi-structured open-ended interviews, carried out five focus groups with usually ten to twenty women in Hebron, Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem, and attended several dozen public political events (political in the widest sense), particularly those community, NGO, protest, solidarity, or joint Palestinian-Israeli meetings that focused on women's issues or peacebuilding and resistance.

Approximately half of the interviews were with more official female (and a few male) leaders, many of whom had been engaged activists during the First Intifada.[24] They had entered more institutionalized politics after Oslo, becoming part of today's NGO-ized elite and working predominantly in NGOs, but also the women's branches of the political parties, women's groups, solidarity groups, and others in urban centers, especially Ramallah.[25] I found it important to speak to these former activists because many of them are involved in implementing the international WPS agenda in Palestine today, including projects related to UNSCR 1325 or joint Palestinian-Israeli women-to-women initiatives. They thus were able to offer me important firsthand insights on how women's politics had changed over the last decades, but also on the applicability and functioning of the liberal peace agenda in Palestine today.

The remainder of my interviews were with ordinary women (and some men) from different backgrounds in villages, towns, and refugee camps, some of whom had also been First Intifada activists but had turned away from official politics. Most of these more informal interviews, which I conducted predominantly in Arabic, happened spontaneously. They might be more accurately described as guided conversations.[26] They took place mainly in improvised settings—not at a desk with notebook, pen, and recorder ready in front of me, but in the kitchen, while cooking dinner, feeding children, washing dishes, or taking a break from work over a cup of coffee. Staying in family homes, participating in women's everyday lives and sharing their daily work, proved to be among the most fruitful occasions to gain insights into the practices and meanings of women's more informal hidden survival, resistance, and coping strategies.

Although I chose a wide and varied sample of interviewees, my aim was not, and the research in this book does not claim, to offer generalizable or representative findings on Palestinian women. I tried to diversify my sample by interviewees' age, residence, socioeconomic background, religion, gender, and nationality as much as possible, but my interviewees' views, of course, depended on their own individual histories and specific positionings.[27] My aim was to build density and provide a "thick

description" (Geertz 1973) not of a specific group of women (chosen by location, ideology, political background, age, or other variables), but of the various different *forms of politics* that women from different backgrounds engage in. The focus groups thus also brought together women united not by their same background but by the similar forms of activism that they (often together) practiced. I was guided by and chose my fieldwork sites and respondents according to women's political practices themselves, not the political actors engaging in them.

With five of my initial interviewees I established more long-term reciprocal relationships and became friends. I spent extended periods with them and their families. Throughout the book I use pseudonyms for all interviewees to protect their anonymity, unless interviewees explicitly requested their names to be revealed. I do, however, provide contextual information for each interviewee when I first introduce them, such as their age, political background, organizational or institutional affiliation, place of residence, or any other information that helps situate their narratives. For my five friends and key research participants I use the pseudonyms Najla, Amal, Karima, Lama, and Adnan. Except for Amal, all have already been mentioned; details about their understandings and practices of political activism are provided throughout the book. Since their voices frequently reappear and hopefully act as a guide throughout the book, I introduce them briefly here. Their lives, of course, have moved on since I conducted my fieldwork. I present their circumstances here as I got to know them in the period of 2007 to 2009.

Najla is unmarried, in her thirties, and lives and works in Ramallah as a trainer for several women's groups, particularly in rural and camp settings. She is a practicing Muslim and originally from a village near Bethlehem. Amal is a midwife in East Jerusalem, mother of four, and used to be active in the communist party during the First Intifada, but has now become disillusioned with and retreated from politics. Karima is a Christian woman and peace activist from Bethlehem in her sixties. Lama is an employee in a Palestinian NGO in Ramallah that worked in joint Palestinian-Israeli civil society projects. She has five boys and experienced the First Intifada as a young adult in Askar Refugee Camp in Nablus. Adnan is a father of four and a local leader of popular resistance protests against the wall in a village near Ramallah.

Particularly with my female friends I was able to establish relations of trust and move beyond formal discussions quickly (see also Abu-Lughod 1985, 1986/2000), allowing me to think (often together with

them) through the complexities of what it means, particularly for women, to do politics on an everyday basis in Palestine. Blurring the lines of friend and researcher, however, could pose problems. Sometimes when I met with my friends, it was difficult to take on my role as researcher without appearing to use the friendship opportunistically (see also Al-Ali in Al-Ali and El-Kholy 1999, 35). Although I had informed all of them about my research, the formal side of our relationship and the fact that I would go back to many of our conversations and write about them later on sometimes slipped into the background. I usually did not take notes during our meetings but tried to listen carefully and write our conversations down later that day. With Karima, Amal, and Lama I conducted a recorded interview toward the end of my stay. What was said in these conversations and the recorded interviews was, like all ethnographic encounters, influenced by our friendship and filtered through my own perspective and positionality.

Working with few of my research participants more closely helped me to avoid considering and representing "Palestinian women" as a somewhat coherent or homogenous group. It also pushed me to consider my own involvement in the research and its knowledge production more critically. Deconstructing collective, especially cultural, groupings, and "writing against culture" (Abu-Lughod 1993/2008) necessitates reflecting on one's positionality, especially as a researcher working in communities other than one's own. While with my Palestinian friends and interviewees I rarely faced the discussion of whether so-called insiders (with their presumed insider knowledge) or outsiders (with their alleged neutrality) are better prepared to do research in and on Palestine, it was in joint Palestinian-Israeli meetings that the issue of where one belongs was from time to time brought up by Israeli participants who seemed to be uncomfortable with my presence there. The short extract below from my field notes of a joint women's meeting to which I was invited by Karima in 2008, one of my close key research participants, illustrates this.

> *At a joint Palestinian-Israeli women's meeting in Haifa, some of the Palestinian participants, Rachel (the Israeli instructor) and I started a conversation about the boat of international activists that went to Gaza to break the siege in 2008.*[28] *The Palestinian women generally supported the action, but they thought it would not change anything. Rachel did not like their pessimism and reminded them that the Israeli army had allowed the boat to enter without problems. This was a*

promising sign, according to her. I asked: "Had there been Palestinians on the boat, what do you think would have been the reaction of the army?" This provoked ironic reactions from the Palestinians: "Of course, they would have just shot them!" and an angry monologue—which I paraphrase and summarize below—against me from Rachel:

> *You should not have any moral judgements or say what is right or wrong. Look, the situation is very difficult. Now with all of the things going on around us I cannot just say anymore what is right or what is wrong, nor what I think will happen or what will not happen. I don't know—so I prefer to say and do nothing. This is much more difficult than what you do—you judge. You have to stay neutral and open-minded. You cannot just come here as an outsider and judge things.*
>
> *You talk, but you take no responsibility for what you say. You are from the outside. This conflict is between me and Karima, between the Israelis and the Palestinians. And by making this judgment, you influence the whole group. You destroy the whole relationship between us, everything that we have built over the past four years. You should shut your mouth—that would be to act responsible.*
>
> *You pity the Palestinians and you feel sympathy for them and their stories—what does that help? Nothing! It even makes things worse because you keep them in this self-perpetuating cycle of pitying themselves rather than trying to get self-empowered.*
>
> *There is no point for us here to talk about helicopters, tanks, and the army. We will not change anything anyway. We have to empower the individual so that she sees her own strength and that she is strong enough to believe in herself when her house is demolished or when the tanks are shooting. We have to teach the Palestinian woman how to empower herself.*

I did not agree with Rachel's depoliticized understanding of self-empowerment, but her remarks about my role and responsibilities as researcher and outsider raised a whole set of questions on my political position: As a (so-called) outsider to the conflict, should I refrain from taking ethical and political judgements and stay silent? Should I try to remain impartial, as Rachel suggested, and attempt to objectively write down what I observe and witness, or should I write with and for my Palestinian friends and research participants?

Research, especially in politically charged settings, can never be objective or neutral, as Rachel demanded. It inevitably *is* partial and politically positioned (Clifford 1986), and, moreover, in my view, also *should* be (see also Scheper-Hughes 1995). The postmodern argument that reality is subjective and constructed can make us forget that material realities *do* exist: for some people in some parts of the world, some things are really quite real. House demolitions, checkpoints, curfews, the wall, and military aggression are not discursively constructed, they are real and they have real material consequences for Palestinians. Not to stress these or deflecting attention from them by arguing that all things and all knowledges are constructed can be more violent, more hostile, more damaging than making a political judgment and taking a moral stance to interrogate and, where possible, balance out material injustices. Scheper-Hughes rejects an understanding of the researcher as objective neutral observer, and instead relies on the notion of "witnessing" that "positions the anthropologist inside human events as a responsive, reflexive, and morally committed being, one who will 'take sides' and make judgments" (Scheper-Hughes 1995, 419).

In a strongly asymmetric and unjust context, such as the Palestinian-Israeli (or the microcosm of the above Palestinian-Israeli women's meeting in Haifa), saying nothing, refusing to take stands under the pretext of objectivity, and writing about what one has observed in an alleged impartial, outsider's voice would be a form of self-censorship and would contribute to maintaining the unjust situation and status quo of unequal power relations. Taking a stance against the occupation and against illegal and unjust Israeli settler-colonial policies, thus, in fact, is not a pro-Palestinian (or anti-Israeli) stance, as Rachel had implied in her criticism to me; it is a pro-humanist position (see Abu-Lughod 1993/2008, 40). The important issue concerns not whether I am an outsider (as Rachel stated) or an insider (a *filasṭīnīyya*, as my friend suggested after the raid), but rather the recognition that, first, I *am* necessarily positioned toward the conflict and, second, that this (privileged) positioning both enables and requires me to take a political standpoint.

When Mahmoud, Liana, and I sat besieged in our house while the Israeli soldiers were raiding the flat below, we felt a strong sense of unity ("us inside" versus "those outside"), but at the same time it was clear that there was at least one major issue that separated us and our experiences of this raid: our passports. The incident did not, as my friend mockingly remarked the next day, make me a real *filasṭīnīyya*. To the contrary: it

made me understand where the real difference between me and my Palestinian friends and research participants lies. It has helped me to better imagine how it might be without a passport that gives legal protection, but also to realize the responsibility and privilege that having this document entails. The defining difference between me and my Palestinian friends and research participants thus has little to do with culture. The crucial issue that separates us, makes us experience things very differently, and enables us to react in vastly different ways is our different legal status in the international nation-state-based system—the historical and political roots of which can and must be traced. I am politically and historically positioned toward this conflict and its people. I am traveling to Palestine with a German passport and am writing from the privileged position of a UK-based scholar at a time when Israeli settler-colonial policies of siege, fragmentation, and occupation are intensifying. Being myself implicated in these geopolitical power configurations and having witnessed its devastating material consequences requires, I find, ethical engagement and political commitment along humanist values, rather than hiding under the cloak of impartiality, objectivity, or cultural and moral relativism.

Feminist solidarity in and for Palestine, whether academic or activist, rather than building on essentialist assumptions of sameness between all women, thus needs to look into history and politics. I have tried to use my privileged position and follow such a historically grounded politically-engaged feminist politics, which recognizes difference but aims for equality, and is based on humanist values. I hope that this book can be not only *about*, but also *with* and *for* Palestinian women's struggles.

CHAPTER 1

Women's Peacebuilding

UNSCR 1325 and the Post-Oslo Peace Supermarket

> There is no funder who tells us what we need or don't need, what is allowed and what is not. But they propose certain "interest issues," and then NGOs decide that this year they should work on that. This makes an organization unprofessional; it makes it look like a supermarket. (Samira int. 2007)

Samira is a young activist who works in an NGO that aims at strengthening Palestinian women's political and social activism. When I interviewed her in 2007, she explained to me how—like most Palestinian female activists—she has to negotiate through the often conflicting agendas that local and international actors put forward on Palestine. Her critical outlook on foreign funders', but also local NGOs' lack of consistency in their programming, and their quick shifting to new "fashionable" topics, is not exceptional. Most Palestinians criticize the post-Oslo peacebuilding industry for fragmenting Palestinian civil society and contributing to its "NGO-ization." After the Oslo Accords, Palestinian civil society and grassroots politics became increasingly professionalized and depoliticized. NGO professionals started targeting specific interest groups (e.g., women, refugees, youths) in short-term output-oriented peace and development projects, rather than mobilizing them for more mass-based voluntary forms of protest and resistance activism as was common during, for example, the First Intifada.[1] As such, the post-Oslo NGO-ization contributed to the disintegration and

weakening of Palestinian civil society, including its once very active and strong social movements and networks.

The NGO-ization of Palestinian civil society produced what has aptly been described as a "globalized elite" (Hanafi and Tabar 2005)—an elite that encompasses mainly urban-based and professionalized supporters of the "peace" process and its negotiation agenda. The "globalized elite" is globalized not just because its members participate in global events, but also because it implements, responds to, and interacts with global agendas, such as Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace (United Nations Secretary General 1992), the Beijing Platform (United Nations 1995), or more recently, the UNSCR 1325 (United Nations Security Council 2000) on Women, Peace and Security. UNSCR 1325, which was unanimously passed on 31 October 2000 by the United Nations Security Council, calls for women's increased participation in conflict prevention and resolution initiatives, as well as their protection and empowerment during conflict.[2]

Since Oslo, and even more so since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, one of the major foreign funding "interest issues," as Samira puts it aptly, has been women's peacebuilding. The resolution and its wider WPS agenda have been added to the programming of many, if not most, local and international organizations active in the field of peacebuilding, conflict resolution, or women's rights in Palestine.[3] Acting as a basket for projects related to conflict resolution (*ḥal aṣ-ṣira*ᶜ), joint Palestinian-Israeli dialogue projects (*barāmij al-ḥiwār*), nonviolence (*lā* ᶜ*unf*), but also gender empowerment and mainstreaming, it fits comfortably within the liberal peace orthodoxy. Women's peacebuilding, grounded in the WPS agenda and the UNSCR 1325, thus has become one of the main products displayed on the shelves of the post-Oslo peace supermarket.

Local awareness of and support for 1325, however, is minimal. Many Palestinians, men and women, consider 1325 (and the mainstream WPS agenda to which it belongs) not only irresponsive to their real needs under occupation, but also a patronizing colonial attempt of "white men [and women] saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak 1988, 297). This stance is not exceptional: interventions by the international community that press links between women's empowerment and conflict resolution are often viewed skeptically by local populations, particularly in contexts of foreign occupation and (neo-)colonialism.[4] While locally dismissed, liberal peace projects based on UNSCR 1325 receive strong international material and ideational support. The resolution has played an important role in attracting international funding as well as feminist solidarity for

Palestine. As such it has functioned to normalize certain forms of female political agency (e.g., joint peacebuilding), while delegitimizing others (e.g., women's popular and everyday resistance).

Joint dialogical peace initiatives, including women-to-women projects based on UNSCR1325, can be anchored conceptually in the Habermasian notion of ideal speech. Habermas argues that it is through ideal speech that private individuals, when they come together in the public sphere, form consensus in rational deliberation on matters of public interest. While Habermas maintains that an ideal speech situation can lead to mutual understanding, he considers other—less idealized and functionalized—forms of language "parasitic" (cited in Gardiner 2004, 35), and thus not useful for politics. According to Habermas the public sphere (and politics more broadly) relies and indeed should rely on discourse ethics and dialogue: people use dialogue and discursive dialectic exchange to justify, verify, and establish validity claims and norms. Habermas's analysis has both an empirical dimension (in his claim that the ideal speech situation and public sphere *was* in existence, but then declined), and a normative one (in his demand that such is the way that politics *should* be done). It has been argued that Habermas's theory can "tackle empirical questions in world politics" (Risse 2000, 2), and, in the context of Palestine, scholars have used his theory to better understand dialogue-based peacebuilding, claiming that dialogue groups between Palestinians and Israelis have been successful in establishing an ideal speech situation (Pfeil 2015).

Countering such claims, the analysis provided in this chapter of the actual experiences of Palestinian women in dialogical conflict resolution groups shows that the Habermasian dialogical model cannot and does not work in Palestine. Dialogue here did not lead to the establishment of consensus and shared validity claims, but rather functioned as a disciplining mechanism that helped to solidify the "peace (agenda) of the powerful," that is, the empty, shallow, and dull peace, as Ghassan had described it in 2008, that the colonizer aims to establish.

After providing a brief historical overview of the developments in women's peacebuilding in Palestine, I discuss the problems inherent in the mainstream liberal WPS agenda. The chapter relies predominantly on interviews conducted with women leaders who work, or worked, on UNSCR 1325 in Palestine. Even though Palestinians have largely lost trust in official politics since 2000, some political actors continue to struggle from within the hegemonic paradigm: the post-Oslo peace and the WPS agenda. In this chapter I aim to shed light on the narratives,

practices, struggles—but also critiques—of those in the Palestinian women's movement who have tried to fight from within and as part of the "globalized elite." I focus on those women activists who use the liberal WPS agenda, have joined Palestinian-Israeli peace initiatives, and have attempted to work with UNSCR 1325 in order make it applicable and relevant to the Palestinian context. Many of the women whose voices feature in this chapter are longtime activists; they have played and continue to play leading roles in women's peace projects.

From Mass-Based Activism to the Liberal WPS Agenda

Joint political initiatives between Palestinian and Israeli women existed since 1948 and were propelled in particular by the Democratic Women's Movement (TANDI), which was founded in 1948 by Arab and Jewish female members of the Communist Party. TANDI worked for women's and workers' rights, organized peaceful marches and protest actions, and advanced a joint solidarity agenda for peace calling for a democratic binational state (Sharoni 1995, 134). What united Palestinian and Israeli women in these early activities was their joint political standpoint against colonialism and discrimination, and for coexistence, not their shared gender identity as women.[5]

A joint political agenda—that of resistance against the Israeli occupation—was also what brought together Palestinian and Israeli women in the years before and during the First Intifada, when joint activities peaked. Israeli human rights lawyers, such as Leah Tsemel and Felicia Langer, defended Palestinian political prisoners, investigated and brought to light the fact that they were tortured in Israeli prisons, and staged joint protest actions (see, e.g., Langer 1975; Ashrawi 1995, 32, 51). Suad, a prominent leftist women's leader with ample experience in women's and peace activism, also during the First Intifada, remembered from her time in the women's prison in Ramla that

> there were many Israeli women's organizations in the beginning of the '80s who visited [us] when we held strikes inside the Israeli prison from '82–'84. We were on strike to gain our rights as female political prisoners and the [Israeli] women's human rights organizations really supported our strike. A group of women used to come and stand in front of the prison in Ramla protesting against the treatment of Palestinian

> political prisoners. . . . They used to always visit us, bring us books, and such things. They wanted to support and show solidarity with Palestinian women. This was, I think, the beginning of [joint solidarity] work: those female lawyers who defended the cases of Palestinian political prisoners. And this, of course, started to pave the way for thinking that we might work together as women. (Suad int. 2008)

Before the start of the First Intifada, however, only few tentative steps were taken by the Palestinian women's movement to establish links with Israeli women. This changed during the First Intifada, as Suad explained:

> Before the First Intifada there was no vision to approach or pay attention to Israeli society, maybe in some programs of some [Palestinian] political parties, but no specific steps were taken from the women's movement. But when the slogan "two states for two people" (*dawlataīn li-l-shaᶜbaīn*) was raised and maybe a peace process was to start, [it was clear that] peace can only come from both sides. Of course, there was also the big role that women played in the First Intifada and the development of women's political leadership that opened a space to develop relations between Palestinian and Israeli women, especially if these were aimed at ending the occupation of the 1967 land. . . . So when it became clear that we [the Palestinians] really believe in peace and in the establishment of two states, a Palestinian state next to an Israeli, a change of thinking was initiated in Israeli society and among the Israeli women. (Suad int. 2008)

The slogan "two states for two people" was officially promoted after the 1988 Palestinian National Council session in Algiers, when the PLO leadership confirmed its commitment to UN Resolution 242, the 1967 borders and the principle of land for peace. This crucial shift in the PLO ideology encouraged the Israeli peace movement, and particularly Israeli women's peace groups, to widen participation in joint peace initiatives. Several Israeli women's peace groups were founded after the start of the First Intifada, among them the Women's Organization for Political Prisoners (WOFPP), a group of women defending Palestinian female political prisoners, and Women in Black, a group of anti-war activists who stage nonviolent silent vigils in various locations in Israel and Palestine and are also often joined by Palestinian women.[6] Joint initiatives between Israeli and Palestinian women groups could take various forms, such as dialogue groups, local and international conferences, and solidarity

protests (Sharoni 1995, 134–35). Suad recounts her involvement in joint women's groups at the time:

> The [joint women's] meetings included, for example, invitations to Palestinian women leaders to come and hold awareness-raising campaigns in Israel. In these session we [the Palestinian women leaders] would explain to them [Israelis] what the concerns of Palestinians are, or that the Intifada is in fact all popular [*shaʿbī*] mass work, like strikes, demonstrations, sit-ins, and that all this aims at ending the Israeli occupation of the 1967 lands and establishing a Palestinian state next to the Israeli. So there started to be more joint work, in the form of solidarity with political prisoners, the human chain in Jerusalem, or when we called for Jerusalem to become two capitals for two states.[7] (Suad int. 2008)

The first contacts between Palestinian and Israeli women were mainly through demonstrations or street actions. Such political solidarity activities, whether women only or mixed, were generally received favorably by the Palestinian public.

But those who met with Israelis also had to face the criticism of normalization (*taṭbīʿ*), that is, of normalizing the status quo of occupation by meeting with the other side. Hanan Ashrawi reflects in her autobiography on the major difficulties she faced in 1988 when participating in the first official and public joint Palestinian-Israeli encounter—a TV debate. For her, the main problem was "to persuade the various factions that such an event could be carried out without conceding the 'normalization' of relations between occupier and occupied" (Ashrawi 1995, 48). The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) refused to participate or lend official support to public Palestinian-Israel dialogue, while the Communist Party was its strongest supporter. Fatah and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) remained ambiguous in their stance toward dialogue (ibid.).[8]

The women's committees, although mostly reflecting the position taken by their political parties, tended to adopt a more pragmatic stance toward joint initiatives. Suad, for example, explained that

> even some of the [women's] committees that did not support the call for two states for two people did not oppose the [joint] meetings. They [only] opposed that you would enter the stage of negotiations or the normalization (*taṭbīʿ*) process. They were afraid of normalization. But

> the message that we sent out to the Israelis was . . . that all the women in the world have to unite in their efforts. In this we were of course influenced by the international conferences that had been taking place for women, whether in Beijing or Nairobi. We were saying that we women—all of us who are struggling in conflict areas—we should come together, talk about this, and discuss our cases. But, of course, those who participated most [in joint activities] were those who supported the call for "two states for two people." (Suad int. 2008)

Several women's peace conferences, often bringing together international, Israeli, and (in much smaller numbers) Palestinian women, have been organized since the First Intifada (see, e.g., Pope 1993; Daniele 2014; Sharoni 1995). In 1989 Simone Süsskind organized "Give Peace a Chance: Women Speak Out," a major international women's peace conference in Brussels attended by over 150 women from around the Mediterranean. Palestinian women participated as committee representatives or as independent experts. The conferences dealt with the linkages between women's emancipatory struggles, nationalism, and national liberation and called for an end to the occupation and the establishment of two states through the path of dialogue and negotiations.[9]

But already then there were also many Palestinian women activists who refused to participate in the growing business of joint women's peace initiatives. The PFLP-affiliated Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC), for example, boycotted the Brussels conference. In an interview conducted in 1991 by Simona Sharoni, the late Maha Nassar, the union's director, expressed her skepticism toward joint women's dialogue groups, asking the pertinent question: "what kind of bridges you want to build, between whom and leading to what?" (Nassar quoted in Sharoni 1995, 142).

After the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords, joint Palestinian-Israeli civil society peace projects received increased financial support from international donors and were institutionalized through the 1995 People-to-People Program.[10] By bringing together constituencies from both sides of the conflict and establishing dialogue and cooperation between them, the People-to-People Program aimed at enhancing mutual relations, building stability, trust, and cooperation and moving toward full reconciliation. Norway and its Institute for Applied Social Science, Fafo, were the official administrators of the People-to-People Program, but other local, bilateral, and multilateral organizations, such as USAID, CIDA, EU, SIDA, and Belgium

Aid, quickly joined the post-Oslo peace market.[11] With its focus on civil-society actors as peacebuilders, the People-to-People Program relied mainly on NGOs for implementation: on the Palestinian side, the projects were administered by the Palestinian Center for Peace in Ramallah under Hassan Abu-Libdeh (Naser-Najjab 2004, 90n73; Endresen and Gilen 2000, 30). It is estimated that, between September 1993 and September 2000, somewhere between $20 and $25 million were allocated to civil-society organizations for joint Palestinian-Israeli peacebuilding (Baskin and Al-Qaq 2002, 544), and by mid-2000, 136 projects had been funded through the People-to-People Program alone (Endresen and Gilen 2000, 31).

Apart from the People-to-People Program, most other joint Palestinian-Israeli conflict resolution projects were (and continue to be) carried out by foreign-funded NGOs. Sometimes Israeli-Palestinian or Palestinian NGOs are involved, but most joint projects tend to be headed by Israeli NGOs that collaborate for their joint projects with NGOs from the other side. NGO involvement in peacebuilding has been widely discussed. Those supporting the liberal peace agenda, and following in particular Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace (United Nations Secretary General 1992), find that non-state actors play a critical role in grassroots, bottom-up peacebuilding.[12] In the Palestinian context, however, NGO peacebuilding has failed to bring about tangible results (Hassassian 2000, 29). Many Palestinians consider NGOs to be mere puppets of outside players, created, used, and instrumentalized only to impose foreign agendas.

These foreign agendas—as Samira's quotation with which I opened this chapter illustrates—fluctuate, and NGOs' programming also shifts accordingly. Samira continued her critique of the post-Oslo peace supermarket:

> [There might be, for example,] an organization that [was] established to work on domestic violence, to give support for women, to take care of them. After that, you see them starting to work on other issues: gender, human rights, media. This is not good. And an organization established to work on supporting communication suddenly works on elections. And an organization established to work on health suddenly works on media programs, agricultural programs, political support. Why? This, I think, is what funders do wrong. Funders make the same mistake as the NGOs. (Samira int. 2007)

While it would be incorrect to claim that international donors dictate agendas that NGOs in Palestine then passively and uncritically implement, there certainly exists a strong prescriptive dimension to funding

agendas.[13] After Oslo, and particularly since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, women's peacebuilding, and its operationalization in mainstream programs through the notions of "women-as-peacemakers" and "women-as-marginal-non-state-actors," has become a major "interest issue" of funders.

Peacebuilding itself thus has become increasingly, and often uncritically, feminized (Richter-Devroe 2009). The official Oslo People-to-People Program (and later dialogue projects) often assembled groups according to "shared" identities other than national, such as age, profession, or gender. Women became a specific target group for joint encounters (Naser-Najjab 2004, 165–67). The Jerusalem Link, an alliance between the (Palestinian) Jerusalem Centre for Women (JCW) in East Jerusalem and the (Israeli) Bat Shalom in West Jerusalem, is probably among the most prominent of such cooperative peacebuilding projects established and sustained under the NGO-ization and feminization of peacebuilding of the post-Oslo liberal peace industry.[14] It grew out of Palestinian and Israeli women's earlier joint activism, but after Oslo it became institutionalized as an NGO.

Rima, who, like Suad, was and is a prominent leader of the Palestinian women's movement with ample experience also during the First Intifada, explained that during the First Intifada contact between Israeli and Palestinian women was more frequent, more real: "There wasn't the wall. Israeli women could come to Ramallah, Nablus, or Jenin. [They would] support people and give out food or other things for children." Contact thus was based on shared activities and geared toward improving the situation on the ground. It was action based, not dialogue based. This joint solidarity work, also during times of curfews, helped to establish bonds. As Rima eloquently concluded from on her own experience,

> [People] could feel each other. The Israelis could better understand the difficult situation that we Palestinians are facing. (Rima int. 2008)

Today, solidarity contacts of this sort have become rarer. On a material level the developments on the ground—that is, closures, curfews, checkpoints, and the construction of the wall fragmenting the West Bank into several isolated cantons and separating them from East Jerusalem and Gaza—make meetings almost impossible. Israelis are not allowed to enter Area A of the West Bank, and Gazans, in any case, are forbidden to leave the Gaza Strip. But the Israeli regime also regularly denies permits to enter Israel and Jerusalem for Palestinians in the West Bank, particularly for those who are believed to have links to the resistance.

As a result of this worsening material situation on the ground, popular opposition to joint peace initiatives grew. The aim of people-to-people projects to change participants' behavior and attitudes toward each other might perhaps have worked for some individual activists at a time of optimism in the early years after Oslo, but with the situation worsening, it has not taken hold in broader Palestinian society. Particularly after the 1996 Netanyahu election, with increased violence, continued settlement constructions, and waning prospects for real peace, fewer and fewer Palestinians felt ready to engage in joint bottom-up peacebuilding and reconciliation processes with the Israeli side (Naser-Najjab 2004). Naser-Najjab's conclusions in her detailed study on the post-Oslo people-to-people projects hold true as of this writing: "Palestinian public opinion . . . was opposed to any form of dialogue that was for the purpose of co-operation and reconciliation" (ibid. 211). There has been "no significant impact on popular attitudes through P2P [people-to-people] activities" (ibid. 239).

Since the failure of the 2000 Camp David Summit and the outbreak of the Second Intifada a few months later, the majority of cooperative efforts for peace and coexistence at the grassroots level have stopped. In 2000 the Palestinian NGO Network called on all Palestinian NGOs "to completely cease all joint projects with Israeli organizations, especially the projects covered under the People to People program, Peres Center for Peace, the joint projects program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), or any other normalization projects" (Palestinian NGO Network 2000, 27). The Norwegian-administered People-to-People Program survived for a while on a low profile but was officially stopped in 2004 after the Likud election (in January 2003) shattered all hopes for peace.

The Jerusalem Link was among the joint projects that the Palestinian NGO Network blacklisted as normalization (*taṭbīᶜ*). But it was also internal disagreements between the Palestinian and Israeli women that brought the joint work of the Link to a halt. At a time when their society was suffering from continuous Israeli military aggressions, the Palestinian part of the Link, the JCW, preferred to temporarily freeze all joint work. Instead, they shifted their focus to more immediate concerns on the ground, for example the need to counter, or at least try to ameliorate, the destructive effects that the construction of the wall or demolitions of houses exercise on Palestinian women's lives. The JCW later resumed joint work with Bat Shalom, but only on an infrequent basis and always

under the condition that joint projects must adhere to a strictly political nature (JCW int. 2008).

The closure of most joint peace projects such as the Jerusalem Link confirmed Edward Said's (and other critical observers') argument that believing that "the occupation might continue while at the same time a few Palestinians and Israelis could nevertheless cooperate on a friendly basis" is "false and misleading" (Said 1996, 36). Said had made these remarks shortly after the 1995 Oslo II Accord, but the collapse of the peace talks and renewed Israeli military aggressions in 2000 underscored the flaws of the false logic of dialogical peacebuilding under occupation once more.

Yet, donor agendas seemed ignorant of such insights; their programming not only failed to take notice of the material developments on the ground but also cared little about the growing skepticism that Palestinians harbored against joint initiatives. For example, in 1998, when most Palestinians had already turned away from joint projects, the EU institutionalized substantive budget lines for joint Palestinian-Israeli peacebuilding, including specific programs for women, through its Partnership for Peace Programme.[15] Similarly, the Wye River Memorandum specifically allocated funds for bottom-up peacebuilding and released them after the Second Intifada began (Herzog and Hai 2005, 30).

Since 2000, with the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and after the outbreak of the Second Intifada, the official focus on "peacewomen" has only increased. Women's peace projects often showcase women's alleged "peaceful" nature as a counter-model to "masculine" violence. The recommendations from the 2005-founded, EU-funded Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum, an umbrella organization that coordinates various peace initiatives, for example, call for the "creation of new Israeli and Palestinian WOMEN's groups that would demonstrate together against violence and death, and work on outreach in Israeli & Palestinian societies" (European Union 2007, 8, original capitalization). Similar post-2000 projects with a focus on women as peacemakers (although with diverging political agendas) include the Women's Intellectual Forum, a part of the Geneva Initiative (see Naser-Najjab 2004), Machsom Watch (see Keshet 2006), and the women's group of the Parents Circle—Families Forum (PCFF).

The most prominent and high-level of the post-2000 women-to-women initiatives, however, is the International Women's Commission (IWC), a tripartite body comprised of Palestinian, Israeli, and international high-level female delegates. The IWC was established in 2005 at an international conference in Turkey convened by UNIFEM. At the time of my

fieldwork in Palestine, 2007–9, the IWC was working hard to push ahead with its mandate: it had been tasked with monitoring the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Israel and Palestine, in particular its call to strengthen local (Palestinian and Israeli) women's participation in peace negotiations. The efforts of the IWC, however, were short-lived. In 2010 it had to close down due to intractable political differences between its Israeli and Palestinian members.

The IWC unquestionably gave high-level institutional support to Palestinian and Israeli women's peacebuilding initiatives. It received considerable international attention, with the UN, for example, praising it as "the first-ever global commission working to guarantee women's full participation in formal and informal Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations [that] will ensure implementation of the groundbreaking 2000 Security Council resolution 1325" (United Nations 2005). Yet, the interviews I conducted with Palestinian members of the IWC (when it was still operating) reveal that the Palestinian IWC delegates faced severe difficulties when trying to challenge the Israeli and international narrow liberal feminist reading of UNSCR 1325. Why did Palestinian women activists join the IWC, given that—by then—Palestinian disillusion with the Oslo liberal peace paradigm, with international resolutions, and with NGO and joint Palestinian-Israeli peace initiatives was already widespread? And how did they argue their case?

Below I present my discussions with the Palestinian women activists from the IWC, and other women's peace groups such as the Families Forum, on five specific positions often taken in this debate: an essentialist-maternalist position that claims women's or mothers' allegedly more peaceful nature, a feminist antimilitarist approach that calls for the eradication of all (intersecting) forms of violence, a feminist antinational stance that unmasks nationalism as male-dominated, a feminist standpoint position that, as distinct from the essentialist position, focuses on women's specific and potentially shared experience in conflict, and finally, a rights-based position that foregrounds women's right to protection as a political claim.

Mothers Building Peace

The association of women's "nature" with peace is not uncommon in feminist and peace literature. It is justified by either biological arguments (i.e., that women are more peaceful "by nature") or maternalist arguments

(i.e., that women's experience of mothering has entrusted them with more peaceful, relational, nurturing—in short, "maternal" qualities).[16] Although criticized for their essentialism, both positions are frequently used to support women's participation in joint women-to-women peace activities. In the Palestinian-Israeli context, Galia Golan, an Israeli member of the IWC, for example, argues that "women tend to listen, rather than engage in monologues. They both listen and often are more willing than men to reveal emotions, fears or concerns, as well as to hear what others are saying" (Golan 2004, 94).[17]

Some joint Palestinian-Israeli conflict resolution groups extend their focus on bonding between women to specifically mothers. One such organization is the Parents Circle—Families Forum (PCFF), an NGO registered in Israel and the United States that receives funding from, among other donors, USAID, the EU, and the Swiss Government Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The PCFF organizes psychosocial workshops for parents from across the Palestinian-Israeli divide who have lost children in the conflict. Talking about her work in the Parents Circle, Peled-Elhanan, an Israeli peace activist whose thirteen-year-old daughter was killed in a suicide bombing attack, finds that "motherhood, fatherhood and the wish to save the children who are still alive are [the only] common denominators that overcome nationality and race and religion" (Peled-Elhanan 2003). Women are brought together in the Parents Circle as mothers, sisters, or daughters to share their grief of having lost a loved one, jointly find ways to cope with their loss, and initiate processes of reconciliation.

While the notion of motherhood as a basis for political activism is accepted and widely practiced in Palestinian society, the notion that maternal care can serve as a basis for bonding across the national divide is generally distrusted. Many of my interviewees considered motherhood alone an insufficient basis for joint activities, finding that their pain and experience as mother under occupation differs starkly from that of Israeli mothers. One of them was Lama. A mother of five and originally from Askar Camp in Nablus, she had moved to Ramallah when I met her and was working in the NGO peace business as a secretary. I attended (sometimes together with her) various Palestinian-Israeli dialogue groups, including a group related to the Families Forum. She explained her decision not to join the forum and shared with me her story of loss in a way that still vibrates with the pain and confusion she experienced as a child:

> If I wanted I could easily join the forum. Do you know why? Maybe it is the first time that I tell you: because my sister, when she died, it was a settler who killed her—an Israeli settler, and then he ran away. She [her sister] stayed four years in the hospital. . . . I don't feel like entering the forum, because I don't feel it is appropriate. I don't feel that really they are equals to me, that the Israeli women felt the same pain that I did when they brought my sister dead from the hospital to our house and I saw her. I was seven years old, the age of Ahmed, my son. They left her in the middle of the house. My mother was in Jordan, my father wasn't there, and I was on my own. They left her there and went. And I was a young girl alone in the house. Imagine the situation. Never in my life will I forget that image. I cannot forget. I thought she wasn't dead. I uncovered her face and felt that it was frozen. I didn't know what to do. I was seven, in the second or third grade. I will not forget. Who from the Israeli women lived this level [of pain]? If [an Israeli woman] wants to sit with me as equal in pain, she must have lived this same pain. . . . I do not really feel that because her son was killed when he was killing Palestinians that she is an equal to me. I cannot. I cannot feel that this is right. But at the same time I think that there should be a role for Israeli women. Not the way she wants, nor according to the way I want, but according to the present reality, the life and normal reality that we are living every day. (Lama int. 2008)

In the joint Palestinian-Israeli encounters that I attended with Lama, she never shared her story of loss. She used to keep friendly professional relations with the Israeli participants, but she kept her pain to and for herself, finding it impossible to equate or even compare her experience of losing her sister as a young girl with an Israeli woman's experience. Lama's reference to a hypothetical Israeli son being killed while killing Palestinians should be read as an attempt to provide and draw attention to the broader political context in which the activities of individual mothers and fathers in the forum take place. She wants to highlight the context of Israeli occupation, brutal military attacks, and settler-colonial policies in which these sons and daughter of Israeli and Palestinian mothers and fathers are killed. Given that this highly asymmetric and unjust context was, however, eclipsed and not further problematized in the meetings Lama had attended, she perceived the Family Forum as a mere performance of false equality in pain and something she would not wish to be associated with.

At one point, I was part of an informal discussion between her and three Israeli women participants in a joint meeting. The Israeli women—all mothers—had come together in one of the breaks and were discussing

their experiences of giving birth. They asked Lama if she had children, to which Lama replied with an emphatic "yes, five boys!" Then they asked her to share with them her story of giving birth to her oldest son. Lama hesitated at first, but then she briefly summarized her experience. She was sixteen when she married and soon after gave birth to her first child. The local birthing care in Nablus was insufficient at that time; there was no option to receive advanced medical care. Lama's childbirth took very long (more than twenty hours), and she narrated it as a scary and painful, in fact life-threatening, experience. This was not what the Israeli mothers had expected. Their birth stories were set in hospitals or homes supervised by midwives and doctors with the latest medical care available. The ways in which the Israeli women spoke about childbirth sounded much less traumatic; they narrated their experience with a mystical romanticized fascination with the wonders of nature and giving birth. Lama's drastically different experience, stemming so clearly from her positioning at the bottom end of the matrix and hierarchies of political control imposed by the Israeli settler-colonial regime, did not fit well into the anodyne and light "bonding" conversation that the Israeli participants had set out for—after she had finished her story, the Israeli women asked Lama no questions and swiftly changed the topic.

Dialogical peace initiatives harbor an inherent danger and tendency to overlook or flatten out the stark inequalities between occupier and occupied. Bettina Marta Prato (2005) argues that the Families Forum, by emphasizing people's individual experiences as victims, not only equalizes their victimhood but more importantly pathologizes conflict by treating victims on the psychological level only. All victims are viewed as equal, and it is believed that through recognizing this equality and commonality in victimhood bridges and peace could be built. Diane Enns, in a similarly critical vein, argues that while "personally, all victims are equal in the sense that they are equally reduced to suffering or grieving bodies; politically, historically, they are not, and it is here, on the collective level, that we could argue the greater responsibility belongs to the Israelis, as it does to all those of us whose governments support the Israeli occupation of Palestine" (2007, 22).

By individualizing and equating the experience of Palestinian and Israeli mothers' suffering, trauma, and pain, approaches such as those adopted in the Families Forum risk decontextualizing and depoliticizing women's experiences. Similar to other psychosocial conflict resolution initiatives, they risk pathologizing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by representing it as an identity-based conflict—a "tragic misunderstanding"

between individuals (Jones 2000, 657). It was precisely this narrow focus on empathy and individual attitudinal change that made many of my interviewees doubt the potential of such projects. For example, Taghreed, a renowned women's activist from Jerusalem in her fifties, remarked that

> some say that, if we bring together women to see the joint element they both suffer from, . . . it might defrost the cold relationship between them. But that is not always the case! No matter how I will sympathize with Israeli women when, for example, they lose their children as soldiers, I cannot, at the end of the day, neglect the context of suffering. That *I* am suffering from *their* soldiers. Because they have also a stake in ending the occupation. . . . This feeling of sympathy should move toward something else. . . . That is always my answer to any international organization that tries to bridge the gap between both sides by just talking about women. No, it is not enough just because we are women! Yes, we have crosscutting issues, because we are second-class citizens in our communities, . . . but that is not enough to mobilize me, as a woman, if there is no common understanding of how to move forward with these emotions toward a change. (Taghreed int. 2008)

The emphasis on the need to "move toward something else," something other than dialogue and reconciliation, structured Taghreed's narrative throughout. She continued her analysis by identifying the Israeli and international community's fixation on empathy and reconciliation as an obstacle to real change and as a way to deflect from the power dynamics between occupier and occupied. She provided the following metaphor:

> I cannot reconcile with my next-door neighbor—even forget being Israeli or Palestinian—if he doesn't come to admit "I am sorry, I made a mistake." Then I will tell him, "Fine. Let's look forward." . . . Without saying sorry or acknowledging your mistake, how can I reconcile with you? Imagine your own husband: you live with him every day, but if he beats you, you cannot go back to him unless he says sorry. So all these projects that are imposed from outside talk about reconciliation, building human relationship—[but] how can I do that if the person who is beating me is not acknowledging or accepting that he is beating me? (Taghreed int. 2008)

While the gendered aspect of Taghreed's comparison can be further problematized, most Palestinians would probably agree with her analysis on reconciliation: before any true reconciliation can take place the Israeli

regime would need to not only recognize the injustices and crimes it committed but also implement concrete material changes on the ground that would address and remedy these injustices (see Tamari 2004; Naser-Najjab 2004; Said 1996). Essentialist positions that reify women, or specifically mothers, as natural peacemakers tend to marginalize such justice and rights-based approaches to peace. By linking femininity or motherhood to emotional and affective forms of relationship building, they gloss over and leave unaddressed the fundamental structural inequalities and political and historical root causes of the conflict.

Feminists Opposing Militarism

A feminist antimilitarist stance, on the other hand, highlights the interlinkages between different forms of violence—structural, physical, ideational—and at different levels—local, communal, national, international. By acknowledging these interlinkages, such an approach concludes that in order to achieve sustainable peace all forms of discrimination, including gender-based biases, need to be eradicated.[18]

Some Palestinian women leaders I interviewed adopted such a feminist antimilitarist approach to war and peace, applying it to criticize the militarized Israeli political and social system. Mina, a founding member of the IWC, for example, stated that

> I think in a situation of war, the feminist agenda is to remove violence and militarization. In Israel you have a state based on security and the army. It is very patriarchal [and] promotes violence against women. . . . Militarization destroys people, whether you are on the powerful side or on the receiving end. . . . You can't just be an oppressor on one side of the border and then come back and be a nice peace-loving person on the other side of the border. Systems of oppression oppress their own [people] eventually. . . . Perpetuating the state concept of militarized security means empowering a few people on each side—unofficial military resisters on the Palestinian side and the army on the Israeli side—at the expense of other initiatives that are more civil-society-based and democratic. (Mina int. 2008)

Palestinian women activists have long highlighted the interrelations between violence from outside (through the occupation) and inside (through public and private patriarchy) both in their feminist theory and politics (e.g., Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2004, 2009; Nashashibi 2006). They have, for

example, placed domestic violence within a wider framework of structural violence, showing that patriarchy (in the public and in the private sphere) and the occupation are interlinked and mutually reinforcing sources of women's subordination.

Yet, the overwhelming majority of my interviewees, and particularly those unfamiliar with feminist theorizing, remained skeptical of such a feminist approach to peace. Most acknowledged the existence of the "continuum of violence" but would not agree for this to be sufficient as a basis to establish bonding and shared peace work with Israeli women. Speaking of her experience in joint Palestinian-Israeli women-to-women initiatives, Feryal, a grassroots popular resistance leader in her fifties from Salfit, one of the governorates in the West Bank, explained:

> The Israelis always wanted to avoid the real political issues and instead talk about gender. They said "let's talk about the social issues in your society. Let's talk about the position of women in your society. Let's talk about patriarchal issues in your society" . . . It is fair enough that they are interested to talk with us about this, but this is not the way to peace. It is none of their business. This is *our* social struggle and it is *our* business to find a way to combine it [women's social struggle] with the national struggle. We need to combine the social and political struggle; they have to go hand in hand. (Feryal int. 2009)

While patriarchal discriminatory structures, and the interlinkages between patriarchy and the occupation, are important and much-discussed topics in Palestinian society, many Palestinian men and women feel, as Feryal's quote highlights, that this should not dominate Palestinian-Israeli debates. They find that "in the present circumstances that critique [of male domination in their society] has to remain within their own community" (Cockburn 2007, 121–22). For many, the foregrounding of male domination (even if at different levels ranging from the household to the international) and the fact that opposition to patriarchy is used as platform for bonding among women in joint women-to-women projects, risk deflecting attention from the occupation as the main source of Palestinian women's (and men's) oppression, disempowerment, and suffering.

Feminists Opposing Male-Dominated Nationalism

More specifically, many of the women I interviewed questioned the applicability of a feminist anti-national stance that deconstructs national-

ism as patriarchal and androcentric (see, e.g., Lentin in Abdo and Lentin 2002; Yuval-Davis 1997) to the Palestinian situation of unrealized self-determination. Taghreed, for example, told me the following:

> Nationalism is an important element in the political context here. Therefore, if I alienate myself from it, I lose ground in my community—so I become useless for any dialogue with the other side. . . . I do respect women in other countries who take this step [of criticizing nationalist discourse], but that is different from the context in my country. Here, I need to respect the diversity and the different levels of resistance that people engage in. I cannot go beyond the national aspiration. Once I achieve my freedom and end the occupation, I can have the luxury of fighting for this next step. (Taghreed int. 2008)

Based on a similar critical view, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), founded in 2004 by Palestinian academics and intellectuals, developed a toolkit for Palestinian women activists considering participating in joint women's dialogue groups (Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, no date).[19] It noted critically that a majority of the encounters initiated after the 1989 Brussels conference aimed to connect Palestinian and Israeli women on the basis of their shared criticism of male chauvinist nationalism and their feminist awareness that the national boundaries separating them are to the benefit of men, not women. In response, it advised Palestinian women to boycott any project presented as apolitical, focused on feminist goals, or seeking to overcome psychological barriers per se (i.e., without linking them to the political context).

Indeed, a near-universal majority of my interviewees, including declared feminists, found it difficult to identify with feminist critiques of nationalism and nationalist projects. Alia, for example, who is a renowned leftist feminist activist with long experience, including during the First Intifada, and now a member of the IWC, considered a borderless post-nationalist stance utopian at best, and a threat to national self-determination at worst:

> I dream, you know, that in the future there will be no borders, not any kind of borders, between the people all over the world. But it is our basic right to exercise our national right that is guaranteed by the UN and international law. . . . As a feminist I can see the deep connection between my sovereignty as a citizen and the nation's sovereignty. And

> this is why we talk about borders. We need borders! OK, after exercising our basic right as a nation with self-determination, we can maybe find other solutions to solve the conflict. Maybe then we can talk about some kind of different solution for Jerusalem, maybe some kind of confederation to manage it. But after! You can't deny my right and then propose a utopian itinerary! (Alia int. 2008)

Deconstructing nationalism as patriarchal and male dominated is an important feminist theoretical insight, but for people living in a situation of statelessness it seems paradoxical to deconstruct the nation-state they are striving for. Many Palestinian women activists thus consider the feminist critique of nationalism an intellectual theoretical exercise, and a luxury reserved for those who live in established nation-states. At best, they regard it as irrelevant, but more often it is perceived as a threat to national unity and thus something better not to be associated with. Even though they might be critical of the PA national leadership and its post-Oslo policies of liberal peace- and state building, most Palestinian women I spoke to were supportive of Palestinian nationalism. They might consider the PA and its policies gender discriminatory or take a stance against nation-statism, but Palestinian nationalism in its non-institutionalized form is seen as "a liberatory movement with the potential for opening up a space for social justice and gender issues" (Abdo in Abdo and Lentin 2002, 8).[20] In the perspective adopted by most Palestinians, it is thus resistance and the national liberation struggle, rather than dialogue and peacebuilding, that can open up spaces for women's increased social and political participation.

Feminist Standpoint Theory and Transversal Politics

When lobbying the PA for increasing women's participation and representation in negotiations and decision-making, Palestinian women activists often stress that women, given their specific experiences of conflict as women, can bring alternative "women-specific" perspectives and demands to the negotiation table. Suad, whose experiences and viewpoints on women's activism in the First Intifada I referred to earlier and who also served as a member of the IWC, for example, told me that

> we [the IWC] think that there is a difference between the view of women and the view of men in negotiations. It is true that the national

> cause unifies [women's and men's positions], but I see for example a difference in how women and men talk about water, or the case of Jerusalem, where women might attach more significance to the issue of family reunification. (Suad int. 2008)

Her argument, that women speak, think, and experience the world from different social standpoints than men and therefore can offer alternative political viewpoints, resonates with feminist standpoint theory. Standpoint theory, in its more classic and rigid version, claims that women, given their positioning as subordinated groups in male-dominated societies, construct alternative knowledges that challenge positivist notions of the universality of (male-biased) objectivity and truth (e.g., Ruddick 1995). Feminist standpoint theory thus focuses not on women's biology and alleged "nature" (as in the essentialist argument above) but on their shared experiences as women. Such a standpoint feminist position is also sometimes used as a basis for joint peacebuilding initiatives to argue that women, since they are most marginalized and vulnerable in their societies under conflict, speak from similar standpoints and, based on their shared experience, can also propose joint visions ahead.

It is true, as Suad stated, that women's experiences in conflict are different from men's, and that therefore they can also usefully be contrasted to those of men. But one must also enquire about the *difference* in experiences, and resulting positions and viewpoints *among* women: do Palestinian and Israeli women have a similar experience of patriarchy and the conflict, do they speak from one standpoint, and can they bring what is presented as a united women's perspective to negotiations? In line with Lama's insistence that her experience of loss as a Palestinian mother differs and should not be equated with that of Israeli mothers, none of the Palestinian women I interviewed subscribed to the idea of a shared Palestinian-Israeli women's experience or perspective. All stressed that their everyday life under occupation differs starkly from that of Israeli women and that consequently they also hold diverging political ideas and positions.

From the late 1990s onward, the concept and practice of "transversal politics" has been proposed by scholars and activists as a way to rescue feminist solidarity politics in joint Palestinian-Israeli women's meetings and to overcome the faults of a rigid standpoint position.[21] Classic feminist standpoint theory, just as the essentialist and maternalist peace argument, risks adopting a static approach to gender identities and positions. Moreover, in its attempt to stress "sameness" among women as

a basis for dialogue, it remains caught in the Habermasian ideal speech logic—a logic that neglects to trace how intersectionality and power, and thus difference, affect the dynamics of dialogue. Feminist theorists have critiqued narrow standpoint theory for this oversight, arguing that there is a need to take into account the wide variety of women's standpoints and viewpoints that are formed in interaction with and embedded in wider social and political discourses and power structures (see, e.g., Haraway 1988; Harding 1991).

"Transversal politics" follows from this corrective to standpoint feminism, but it heeds and aims to overcome not only the traps of sameness but also that of difference—both issues that have dominated feminist politics and theorizing since second-wave feminism. In Palestine and Israel, transversal politics has functioned as one of the models to think through and practice feminist solidarity politics across the divide, in particular in post-Oslo women-to-women projects supported by Italian feminist politicians and theorists (e.g., Luisa Morgantini and Rafaella Lambertini). Engaging in a process of rooting (in one's own subjectivity) and shifting (to that of the Other), feminist transversal politics encourages participants to look for similarities rather than differences: "While their [Palestinian and Israeli women's] different positionings and backgrounds were recognized and respected—including the differential power relations inherent in their corresponding affiliations as members of Occupier and Occupied collectivities—all the women who were sought and invited to participate in the dialogue were committed to refusing 'to participate unconsciously in the reproduction of existing power relations,' and 'to finding a fair solution to the conflict'" (Yuval-Davis 1999a, 122). Transversal politics thus was understood as a feminist solidarity politics that could offer a corrective to universalist "global sisterhood" politics (i.e., the essentialist assumption of sameness among all women) and to particularist identity politics (i.e., the overemphasis on differences between women, thus potentially paralyzing feminist solidarity).

Yet, transversal politics remains problematic and has failed to bring about lasting change in the Palestinian context. This is due mainly to the fact that little consideration is given to the normative effect of social and political forces, that is, political cultures, on women's identities, feelings of belonging, and knowledge constructions. Many of the Palestinian activists I interviewed, such as Leila, also a member of the IWC, stressed that although Palestinian women's *experiences* (and resulting political inputs to negotiations) might differ from that of Palestinian men's, Pal-

estinian women's and men's overall political position remains united on the issue of rights and justice:

> Everywhere in conflict you see that women have more the tendency to listen, to understand, to talk about the details, to try to find solutions, etc. but this doesn't mean that a Palestinian woman sitting with an Israeli woman would have a different position than a Palestinian man. Because the basics have to be solved, the rights have to be recognized. . . . That is why always the political issue is the main issue. I cannot go and do an activity with you when you don't recognize my rights. It doesn't work. I cannot promote the IWC in my society when I see that some [of the Israeli IWC members] don't recognize my rights. . . . It is not a woman's or man's issue—it is always a matter of interests. (Leila int. 2008)

Palestinian women's positions, as Leila stresses, are dominated by national rather than gender-specific concerns. The process of rooting and shifting, although an interesting starting point for feminist solidarity politics, thus remains problematic: the place and identity one is rooted in is never an individual choice, but is socially and politically determined. The way in which situatedness and positionality translates into knowledge and self-identification thus depends on social and political experiences, practices, and norms—in short, on local political cultures (see also Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis 2002, 316).

In a context such as the Palestinian, where national rights are denied, national political positions and the Palestinian political culture of resistance are strengthened. That means that most Palestinian women cannot—and do not want to—dissociate themselves from their national narrative and collectivity. They might use difference feminism to highlight that Palestinian women's perspectives on specific issues (e.g., Jerusalem, as Suad stated) are different from Palestinian men's to strengthen their demand for women's equal political representation when lobbying the PA and other institutional bodies. But they would not consider their political experiences and related positionings comparable to (let alone the same as) those of Israeli women.

Transversal politics, with its call on participants to refrain from acting as representatives of their national groupings and instead build bridges, dialogue with each other, and imagine a joint narrative of past and future, thus continues to be a challenge. It is as a result of its prioritizing of and aiming toward dialogue and consensus that transversal politics remains

wedded to—and trapped in—the Habermasian logic of ideal speech. For Habermas, validity claims are recognized and formed intersubjectively in free and unconstrained communication, the ideal speech situation. But dialogue between occupier and occupied, even if practiced through transversal politics' engagement in rooting and shifting, is *dominated* by—not unconstrained and free of—power dynamics. In a context such as the Palestinian, characterized by stark power asymmetries and radical political (and politicized) difference along national lines, calling on participants to shed these affiliations might constitute an important and ideal democratic political imaginary, but it remains hard to realize in practice. As such, transversal politics can even be read as utopian, as decontextualized, and as eclipsing (or, at a minimum, operating outside of) the existing unjust political context of settler-colonial, occupation, and ethno-nationalist politics.

Rights and Protection

A final position taken among women peace activists in Palestine is one emphasizing UNSCR 1325's focus on the right to protection. The resolution calls on all parties to the conflict to ensure the protection of women and girls in conflict from gender-based violence and rape, but also from all other violations of their rights under international law, particularly as set out in the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Many feminist scholars have criticized the resolution's narrow focus on protection on the grounds that it might infantilize women by ignoring, reducing, or homogenizing their wide-ranging experiences and forms of agency under the category of "womenandchildren" (Enloe 1990). Infantilizing and victimizing women, it is argued, might assign women a passive, apolitical role and leave the domain of politics and decision making reserved for men. Knesset and IWC member Naomi Chazan, for example, argues that "the emphasis placed on protecting women in times of violence may contribute to the stereotypical image of women as victims and thus undermine their credibility as problem-solvers" (Chazan 2004, 55).

While such considerations are important feminist insights in the study of war and violence, most Palestinian IWC members I spoke to nevertheless argued that, among the different themes dealt with in the resolution, its call to ensure the protection of women and their rights under international law offers the most leverage for peace and anti-occupation

activism. For example, Alia, whom I quoted earlier on her "pro-border" position, stated that UNSCR 1325

> is not just [a way] to tackle the role of women in the negotiation process, pre-, during, and post-conflict. No! 1325 also talks about the protection of women under conflict. It has many more components that advocate women's *rights* under conflict. (Alia int. 2008)

Such a focus on rights, rather than reconciliation, offers Palestinians a way to stress the political nature of their activism and, moreover, a language through which they can make their voices heard and understood internationally.

It was also such a rights-based perspective that led Palestinian IWC members to insist that the IWC's joint charter be anchored in international law, UN resolutions, and past Israeli-Palestinian agreements. The charter called for "an end of the Israeli occupation and a just peace based on international law [including relevant UN resolutions], human rights and equality" and the establishment of a "viable sovereign Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel on the June 4, 1967 borders" (International Women's Commission 2005). The charter and the legal frameworks it refers to, however, were interpreted very differently by the Palestinian and Israeli IWC members. Leila, a member of the IWC, explained:

> The [IWC] charter refers clearly to recognizing our rights, international law, UN resolutions, and the two-state solution. We thought it was clear enough [but] after three years, now we are reviewing the charter. We discovered that some of the Israelis, members [of the IWC] who signed the charter, are talking about Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. If you agree to the 1967 borders, then you cannot say that these are neighborhoods. These are colonial settlements. This is Palestinian land. . . . So it is either that they haven't read the charter or that they don't understand it. They have different interpretations of the charter. (Leila int. 2008)

The conflicts between the Palestinian and Israeli IWC member over the interpretations of international law, UN resolutions, and even their own charter, reveal that on the Israeli and international sides, not all fight for Palestinian (women's) political and economic rights and protection. For Palestinian women in East Jerusalem, the Israeli settlements have devastating and strongly disempowering effects: economically, politically, and socially. Women in East Jerusalem have lost their jobs, their

housing, and their freedom of movement. They lack political representation through which they can represent and fight for their rights in the city. And they struggle to keep some resemblance of a normal life for their fragmented families, whose members are separated and dispersed between the cantons in the West Bank and Jerusalem.[22] If settlements in East Jerusalem are maintained under the pretext that they are mere "neighborhoods" (as proposed by Israeli members of the IWC), Palestinian women's rights and protection will continue to suffer. Palestinian IWC members' struggle to establish their rights-based interpretations of UNSCR 1325 as authoritative highlights a major shortcoming of international law: that it often leaves space for different interpretation due to vague language and, in doing so, implicitly favors and strengthens the position and interpretation of the more powerful.

The resolution itself is unclear on the issue of rights and lacks an intersectional perspective that would trace, recognize, and target the links between women's oppression at different levels. It makes, for example, no mention of social or economic rights, such as the right to basic living conditions or right to housing (see also Hazan 2004). Its overall outlook thus is depoliticizing and normalizing; the resolution has no teeth to grasp, address, and transform the unequal context of colonization and occupation in Palestine.

This is further problematized by the fact that the Resolution lacks efficient monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, a well-known problem of international law (see, e.g., Chinkin and Charlesworth 2006). The difficulty of enforcement is even heightened in the case of 1325 because, compared to other international legal documents, UNSCR 1325 has a weak standing, depending on the good will of member countries to ensure its implementation (Amar 2004, 38). Although the Knesset adopted a law calling for the implementation of 1325 and Palestinian President Abbas recognized the IWC through an official decree in 2005 (United Nations Development Fund for Women 2006), some questions remain: who is responsible for the enforcement of 1325, and who can be held accountable for its violations?

As long as the occupation persists, the PA has no means to enforce 1325, let alone guarantee its protection for women. The recurrent brutal military assaults on Gaza, but also the everyday violence exercised at the hands of the occupation forces in the West Bank and East Jerusalem (see, e.g., Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009) illustrate the failure of international law in general, and 1325 in particular, to protect civilians, women, men, and

children alike. Palestinians cannot rely on their own quasi-government to shield them from Israeli violations of their basic rights (Nazzal 2009). They not only lack a representative authority but, more importantly, have no valid means, bodies, and institutions through which to fight for their sovereignty, legitimacy and basic social, and political and economic rights.

Haneen is not a member of the IWC, but as a prominent woman activist of the First Intifada she is well aware of the shortcomings of the international legal system. When I interviewed her in 2008, she expressed her disillusionment poignantly:

> How many times did we send letters to the UN calling for ceasefires, resolutions, etc., but nothing happened? There have been so many resolutions since '48, but they are never implemented. We need something very practical, not that abstract. (Haneen int. 2008)

Her call for "something very practical" is perfectly justified: the UN and the international community have altogether failed to enforce the implementation of international law and the multiple resolutions issued on Palestine. This shows that although Palestinians might resort to the international rights framework to make their voices heard internationally, when it comes to implementation of their demands (e.g., for protection) they remain outside this "universal" rights framework.

A deep skepticism of the usefulness of international law, human rights, and past agreements to support the Palestinian national cause thus remains. Some critics cite the colonial and Western origins of international law and the double standards with which the international community tends to apply them. Others find that framing the national struggle in humanitarian or human rights terms might risk depoliticizing it further.[23] Allen (2013), for example, has discussed "the rise and fall of human rights" in Palestine, shedding light upon the ambiguous relationship that many Palestinians entertain with the international human rights agenda. Palestinians turn to human rights when wanting to make their demands heard on an international stage. But at the same time, they harbor a strong "cynicism" toward that same "human rights industry" (Allen 2013, 4) because it has—as Palestinians know all too well—done little to advance their struggle for justice and self-determination.

This cynicism is also expressed in relation to the liberal WPS agenda, including its UNSCR 1325. If Palestinian women (and men) agree at all to use international law as a framework for their activism, most would

refer to the Geneva Convention, human rights, or those UN resolutions that directly acknowledge Palestinian national rights (e.g., 242, 338, and 194) or condemn Israeli violations of international law (e.g., 1322 and 1860)—but not 1325. Jumana, a young activist who, at the time of my fieldwork, led a Palestinian women's NGO that also works on 1325, expressed this well:

> For women on the ground, why should 1325 be more important than any other resolutions—like 194, for example? How can it work without Israel ending the occupation? Israel doesn't abide by any UN resolution, why this one? (Jumana int. 2008)

Since not even those resolutions that make strong political claims have been properly addressed, let alone implemented, it should not come as a surprise that most Palestinians do not pin their hopes on 1325, a resolution that can be—and *is*, in the liberal interpretation—read as prioritizing the protection of women's over political and national rights.

Nevertheless, some women activists, including those in the IWC, have tried to make use of the international rights framework as best they can. These activists try to operationalize 1325 and adapt it to their context of military occupation and prolonged violence. To do so, they insist on a rights-based rather than narrow liberal interpretation of the resolution. For them, the protection clause, rather than the resolution's liberal call for women's participation and empowerment, promises most leverage. They emphasize that although as women they have specific experiences and need specific kinds of protection, they struggle first and foremost (just as the rest of their people) for the protection of their rights.

Protection here does not mean the protection of women from militarized violence only but is interpreted more broadly as the protection of their political, national, economic, social, civil, and other rights. The ways in which Palestinian women use discourses of protection, suffering, and even victimhood thus is not outside of the political. It does not depoliticize their national struggle, it is not a replacement or challenge to discourses of resistance, and it does not reduce women to mere victims in need of protection and without agency. To the contrary, their rights-based interpretation of the UNSCR 1325's protection clause is complementary to and supports their national struggle: calling for protection from political and military violence is a way for Palestinian women to claim political rights (see also Feldman 2007).

Conclusion

UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security has rightly been considered a landmark in women's struggles to mainstream gender in conflict resolution and prevention in the UN system and its member states. However, in the Palestinian context, most projects associated with 1325 or the liberal WPS agenda, especially joint Palestinian-Israeli women's peace initiatives, have failed to receive societal support and had to close down. Most have been accused and rejected by Palestinian society as a form of *taṭbīʿ* (normalization), or even collaboration. Women activists not only tend to consider themselves first of all oppressed Palestinians (rather than oppressed women), they are also *expected* to do so. Drastically breaching these norms might not only be dangerous for them (because they risk being branded as normalizers or collaborators), but also detrimental to both their national and gender struggle (because they would lose societal support).

Among the Palestinians I met and spoke to, only few—mainly NGO workers—had heard of the resolution. If they had, they tended to perceive it as elitist and irrelevant, or sometimes even detrimental to their real needs and priorities under Israeli occupation. Even among those women activists who are trying to bring about change from within the system and work with the Resolution a certain level of disillusionment and self-criticism prevails. Maha Abu Dayyeh Shamas, a renowned Palestinian activist, NGO leader, and also one of the IWC members I interviewed, acknowledges that "as feminists, we tend to adopt a global perspective—we have worked hard on joint meetings and gained much prominence addressing international bodies beyond our respective communities. However, this has limited the dialogue to a small group of people. We have really only reached out to friends within a relatively narrow circle" (Abu Dayyeh Shamas 2004, 51).[24]

As this chapter shows, the difficulties the resolution faces in its implementation stem partially from its vague and inconsistent language as well as from its lack of enforcement mechanism—both criteria common to the international legal system. The major obstacle of 1325, which hinders it from constituting a conducive framework for Palestinian women's peace activism, however, is its adherence to the liberal peacewoman paradigm. With its strategy and conceptual basis, a combination of maternal care–based peacebuilding and the dialogue-for-peace model, the liberal WPS

agenda risks decontextualizing and potentially depoliticizing the conflict by sidelining its historical and political dimensions and instead aiming for reconciliation between (assumed to be equal) individuals from both sides. The liberal model's insistence on dialogue and negotiation is misleading in a context of settler colonialism and occupation, and can, moreover, block genuine political transformation.

The limits of this model can be further explained through a critical engagement with its theoretical grounding, the liberal dialogical peace. As outlined earlier, the peace orthodoxy with its dialogue-for-peace model is anchored in a liberal approach to peace and politics that, in turn, can rely on—and in fact might be epitomized—by Habermas's liberal conceptualization of the public sphere, in particular his notion of ideal speech and his theory of communicative action (1984, 1987). Habermas's understanding of dialogue, consent and deliberation as main sources for the construction and legitimation of values and a shared lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), that is, for doing politics, overlooks that the occupier and the occupied might lack a shared lifeworld (see also Risse 2000, 14; Fultner 2001, 433); their lifeworld*s* might be and in fact *are* crucially diverging. This is manifested, for example, in Palestinians' and Israelis' strongly diverging narratives of historical events, but more so even in people's everyday life experiences and self-identifications. Assuming that dialogue can overcome this divide and build on and yield norms valid and acceptable to both occupier and occupied ignores the fact that real-world material and political power structures (what would fall under Habermas's "system world" [*Systemwelt*]) have influences deep down into the "lifeworld" (*Lebenswelt*). Palestinians do not "by nature" hold views different from Israelis' views, nor is this difference applicable to every single Palestinian and Israeli. Rather, injustices committed and material disparities established on the ground—that is, the power asymmetries inherent in this settler-colonial constellation—have reshaped and reinforced the two parties' crucially different lifeworlds.

The neat distinction that Habermas draws between his lifeworld of common understanding and his system world of structures of domination and power asymmetries thus is abstract and artificial. Fraser (1985) has convincingly demonstrated how material power structures of the system world are discursively reconstructed in the lifeworld, that is, how the two worlds are in fact closely intertwined. Real (system world) inequalities can only be temporarily set aside and glossed over during dialogue and discursive deliberation. But they nevertheless continue to

determine how people self-identify and how and whether they can access resources, channels, and means through which validity claims and norms are established as hegemonic. As such, Habermas's ideal speech theory is unable to grasp the complexity of the real world where speech, dialogue, and consensus making are influenced, determined, and constrained by mutually constitutive real (system) world and constructed (lifeworld) power asymmetries. His theory's focus on dialogue and consensus cannot theorize the fundamental power differences and radical disagreements that exist between Palestinians and Israelis, and, as such, has little to say about how power functions in actual politics.

Particularly postcolonial and feminist scholars have criticized Habermas for his Eurocentric and male-dominated vision, which remains insensitive to power, context, and difference. Habermas's theory, by celebrating and reifying consent and dialogue as core to politics, fails to theorize anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, or anti-occupation struggles, that is, struggles that are characterized by strong asymmetries of power (see also Said 1993, 336).[25] Scholars who argue that it is "more than justified to link [Habermas's theory] to the rationale behind dialogue-based people-to-people peace-building programs" (Pfeil 2015, 124) make the mistake of imposing Habermasian theoretical and normative ideals—the "ideal speech"—to a much more complicated settler-colonial context fraud with power asymmetries, injustices, and discrimination.

Dialogical peacebuilding projects, such as the women-to-women initiatives portrayed in this chapter, cannot adhere to the Habermasian ideals of "power neutrality and transparence" (ibid. 125). Claiming that grassroots dialogue groups based on the Habermasian model might "contribute to building a public sphere of peace" (ibid. 137) thus risks obstructing genuine recognition of difference. Habermas's dialogical model, and by extension liberal peacebuilding, might be merely putting aside—"bracket[ing]" in Fraser's (1995, 288) terms—inequalities. It does not aim to overcome and transform discrimination and inequality but rather "is constituted on the basis of domination and exclusion" (M. Hill and Montag 2000, 10; see also Jabri 1996, 158). As such, it risks removing justice and equality as principles from understandings and practices of peace and politics, and, in Palestine, contributes to perpetuating the status quo of the Israeli occupation, militarization, and settler colonialism under the guise of peace (see also Said 1996, 38).

Global feminist peace agendas that follow such liberal models and do not carefully respond to local contexts can thus function as disciplining

agendas. Women's peace initiatives that prioritize gender identity and women's emancipation over national identity and the national liberation struggle might weaken rather than strengthen local women's struggles by establishing hierarchies in which a few of the "globalized elite" target, teach, and discipline the broader masses into acceptable forms of doing politics. Jad (2004b) has illustrated this dynamic convincingly when she showed how after Oslo a shift took place in Palestinian society from women leaders (e.g., in the First Intifada) transferring *power to* the grassroots, to the post-Oslo globalized feminist NGO elite practicing a form of *power over* ordinary women. Post-2000 interventions based on the liberal WPS agenda have exacerbated this trend; they have propelled a shift in Palestinian political culture away from mass-based social movement activism toward professional, project-based peace politics. With their attempts to discipline local Palestinian women's activism within the liberal canons of dialogue, reconciliation, and access-based women's empowerment, they have alienated local constituencies and further fragmented the Palestinian women's movement into different, often competing, groups, thus weakening its political impact and leverage.

To conclude, the international WPS agenda can only become relevant for Palestinian activists if it addresses the unequal power structures and material realities on the ground that are the root causes of, and sustain Israeli settler colonialism in, Palestine. A contextualized and repoliticized feminist peace agenda in Palestine thus would need to acknowledge the intersections between political (including national), economic, and social (including gender) rights, rather than prioritizing one variable (gender) over others (e.g., the national). Based on such an intersectional approach, it can then propose a program for women's peacebuilding that is integral to and supportive of a wider political program for Palestinian self-determination, justice, national rights, and liberation. In short, rather than aiming for gender empowerment or reconciliation at an individual, isolated level, women's peace and anti-war initiatives in Palestine need to follow a joint collective resistance agenda that identifies and targets the conflict's historical and political root causes: Israeli settler colonialism and occupation. It is additional to and in intersection with—but not instead of—such shared political aims that global women's solidarity movements can also propose shared feminist or gender goals.

CHAPTER 2

Women's Popular Resistance

Embodied Protest and Political Claim Making

> Israelis also joined [the demonstrations]. It was good, because for many of the children here it was the first time that they saw an Israeli not as a soldier or a settler. But we have to make our standpoint clear: we reject all normal relations with Israelis during the occupation. We need to speak [about] and deal with the occupation first, before we can speak about peace. If the Israelis and internationals are with us on this point—OK, they can join our activities. (Adnan int. 2009)

Adnan found, in principle, no fault in involving Israeli activists in the popular resistance protests against the construction of the wall in his village. Acutely aware of the power dynamics inherent in solidarity activism, Adnan had earlier described to me the liberal peace model as a relationship between master and slave. Such an asymmetric relation, he had stressed, cannot be a basis for joint political work. His acceptance of Israeli anti-occupation activists in the protests thus came with conditions: they must share and support the Palestinian political agenda of resistance against Israeli settler colonialism and occupation. His, and most Palestinians', rejection of "all normal relations with Israelis during the occupation," including in joint Palestinian-Israeli dialogue and peace initiatives, should thus not be understood as a principled or categorical refusal to engage with the other side. Rather, what is refused are the proposed methods and frames: dialogue, negotiations, and deliberation—that is, the liberal peace paradigm.

In sharp contrast to joint people-to-people peace initiatives, the shared aim of resistance activism is to collectively target, dramatize, and eradicate settler-colonial exploitation, inequality, and discrimination, not to sideline or even "bracket" it in false performances of dialogue and deliberation. For popular resistance activists, such as Adnan, political engagement in a context of settler colonialism and occupation cannot be reduced to dialogue and negotiations, but rather must take more radical oppositional forms of politics and resistance. It is, they argue, through such joint participation in antagonistic contentious politics, rather than through dialogue, that joint values and validity claims as well as individual attitudinal or behavioral change can be created between Palestinian and Israeli activists. As such, this radical politics of resistance and refusal is decidedly different from Habermas's conceptualization of the political. Being situated outside of what liberal accounts traditionally define as the "public sphere," women's popular resistance, as I argue in this chapter, form post-liberal "subaltern counterpublics" (Fraser 1992, 1995). Fraser understands "subaltern counterpublics" as "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses. Subaltern counterpublics permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (Fraser 1995, 291).

In such counterpublics, women (and men) practice nonconventional forms and modes of politics—not voting, not participating in political parties or labor unions, not running for political office, but, for example, as in the case of Palestine, demonstrating, protesting, and confronting the Israeli occupation forces. Doing politics differently, female resisters enact and imagine alternative political subjectivities, which not only vary from, but also challenge, classic liberal notions of political practice and subjecthood. Popular, largely nonviolent, collective resistance thus differs from both liberal peacebuilding (discussed in the previous chapter) and individual acts of survival and everyday resistance (discussed in the following chapter).

Scholarly literature has variously termed popular resistance "protest" (Jaspers 1997), "civil disobedience" (Sharp 1973), or "contentious politics" (McAdam, Tilly, and Tarrow 2001). Popular resistance has also been studied by conflict transformation scholars who have theorized about nonviolent techniques to transform the structural context of conflict, as well as by "new" and "old" social movement researchers who look more carefully at the material and ideational context in which activists oper-

ate.[1] Resistance acts (collective, but even more so individual everyday acts) have also been of interest for anthropologists and sociologists who strive to identify alternative sites and qualities of transformative agency.[2] Scholars from different disciplines and schools have thus discussed and critically engaged with conceptualizations of resistance and some have explicitly tried to work inter- and/or cross-disciplinarily, aiming to establish synergies.[3] Nevertheless studies of resistance remain "thin because they are ethnographically thin: thin on the *internal politics* of dominated groups, thin on the *cultural richness* of those groups, thin on the *subjectivity*—the intentions, desires, fears, projects—of the actors engaged in these dramas" (Ortner 1995, 190; emphasis added). In this chapter I respond to Ortner's (1995) critique by providing a "thick description" (Geertz 1973) of Palestinian women's popular resistance activism after 2000. While popular resistance has been studied extensively with regard to the First Intifada, it is often deemed to be nonexistent, or irrelevant for political change in the post-Oslo era. Those studies that do inquire into the potentials of popular resistance as a catalyst for change tend not to pay particular attention to women's involvement in and the gendered dimensions of popular resistance.[4]

Yet, acts of civil disobedience do take place in post-Oslo Palestine, and women and gender dynamics form an essential part. Gender dynamics affect protest mobilization, and vice versa. All social movements use gendered frames to construct collective identities, and gender "is also constructed in movements that do not explicitly evoke the language of gender conflict and, therefore, is an explanatory factor in the emergence, course, and outcome of protest groups" (Taylor 1999, 13). In "subaltern counterpublics" (Fraser 1992, 1995), women challenge—discursively and through their embodied practices—not only existing political norms, but also gender norms, constructing and enacting alternative political and gendered subjectivities. For example, by using their bodies as sites of political engagement and confronting Israeli tanks and soldiers, female activists challenge gendered norms of conventional politics that construct them either as passive victims or caring, nurturing mothers of the nation. Protestors instrumentalize gender identities not only to construct collective identities, but to politicize and transform gender models, norms, and regimes.

I start the chapter with a short historical overview of the developments of female popular protest to illustrate the shifts that have taken place in the Palestinian popular resistance landscape. In comparison

to the mass-based social movement of the First Intifada, popular resistance activism today is far less extensive and much more localized: it is practiced in different forms; framed and organized under various (often competing) local, national, and international agendas; and pursues different (and sometimes conflicting) goals. My study of the post-2000 Palestinian popular resistance scene—its internal politics, the actors involved, the methods they use, and their competing claims on leadership—is based largely on interviews with popular resistance leaders and activists, mainly rural women, involved in protests against the wall in their villages from 2002 onward. In the final part of the chapter I study the discursive level, especially the ways in which activists frame their popular resistance activism in their attempts to garner local, national, or international support. Women protestors, in particular, need to maneuver carefully through various discursive frames, norms, and expectations that aim to restrict—but that can also open up—spaces for their public political agency. Palestinian women through their protest action thus not only resist the Israeli occupation, but also performatively enact new political subjectivities and make political claims.

Fragmentation of Popular Resistance after Oslo

The post-Oslo informalization of politics in Palestine has proceeded at various levels and in different fields. In the popular resistance scene, it is expressed through not only reduced participation but also fragmentation and localization of the movement. Many activists lament that participation in popular resistance has become more dangerous for Palestinians, both because the Israeli regime has escalated its harsh and brutal assaults on protestors, and because there is no united Palestinian leadership and organization of the popular resistance that could provide some form of training, preparation, and perhaps even protection for participants. For Sahera, a mother of two and former First Intifada activist I interviewed in 2014 in Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem, the issue of security was crucial:

> They [the Israeli army] want to provoke us. They want to do anything that will make our lives worse. Provoke us in any way, try and prove they are in charge on this land. But every day you see the boys throwing stones [at them], then there's [tear] gas. Maybe [for the boys] it's just a reaction [to the army]; like: "my friend got shot with rubber bullets, tomorrow I'm going out to throw stones for my friend." This is what happens with the boys. That's what the boys are saying in the

> streets. Very young ones—look how old they are. They don't defend the nation (*waṭan*), they are taking revenge. . . . You start to feel that it has become just a game of [the Israeli] army versus Arabs. Nothing else. They [the young protestors today] don't know anything. . . . If they [the Israeli army] detain someone from the camp [now], he might give away 50 names. There's no sense of [maintaining] safety. There's no awareness. (Sahera int. 2014)

The lack of party or national leadership and central coordination in popular resistance in Palestine today is an intended result of Israeli occupation policies. It has led not only to the lack of security and awareness that Sahera is talking about here, but also to a general political fatigue among many Palestinians. This might be particularly true for women, for whom spaces for political agency have been shrinking with the escalations of the Second Intifada in an increasingly militarized and masculinized political atmosphere (Johnson and Kuttab 2001).

But this has not always been the case. Women have long been active in popular protest. Under the British Mandate (1922–48), they participated in demonstrations, wrote protest letters to the British administration, and actively supported early revolts (including the 1921 Jaffa riots, the Wailing Wall Riots of 1929 in Jerusalem, and the 1936–39 Great Revolt).[5] As detailed in the introduction, it was, however, from the 1980s onward that popular resistance (*muqāwama shaᶜbīyya*) became more widely practiced and theorized as a political culture and as a strategy for resisting Israeli occupation in Palestine. While the male-dominated leadership of the First Intifada solidified this shift toward popular resistance at the discursive and conceptual level, women played a crucial role in normalizing popular nonviolent resistance through their everyday political practices.[6] For them resistance became a part of life: women engaged in what Jean-Klein (2001) has termed "self-nationalisation" by disciplining themselves and others to partake in informal everyday, as well as more public collective, forms of resistance.

Women's political activism in popular resistance during the First Intifada was mass-based, centrally organized, and, as such, essential for the maintenance and running of the uprising. Sahera continued her critique on the lack of safety in today's protests drawing a telling comparison to popular resistance activism during the First Intifada. She stressed:

> Before, in the First Intifada, it was different. There was a feeling of security, a national feeling. We used to have secret meetings, a group of girls, and study political books. We used to sit by candlelight and study

> them in order to understand them. We knew what Fatah meant, what the Popular Front meant, Hamas, democracy—we understood all those things. We knew what direction we were going, what we wanted. . . . We were told how to behave if detained. They told us in secret meetings: "Die rather than give away someone's name!" (Sahera int. 2014)

As Sahera explained, female resistance activists were trained and prepared by the leadership to participate in the collective uprising of the First Intifada, and they played a crucial role in sustaining it. Women participated in large numbers in protests, marches, and sit-ins; their work in the committees, alternative schooling, or food cooperatives formed the basis for countering Israeli occupation and curfew policies and for the boycotting of Israeli products. With such a strong platform for activism established in the 1980s, what caused the sharp decline in women's participation and trust in public collective politics that Sahera and so many other First Intifada activists lament?

After the 1993 Oslo Accords, popular resistance decreased substantially as the PA focused on peace- and state-building. Many former First Intifada activists shifted from popular resistance to civil society building. Several, such as the Palestinian IWC members quoted in chapter 1, became professionals, working in NGOs, international organizations, academic research centers, and think tanks. Once the failure of the Oslo liberal peace agenda became apparent, the political culture and rationale of resistance (*muqāwama*)—although in multiple, widely diverging, and often competing forms—started gaining currency again. Attempts to revive popular nonviolent resistance as an anti-occupation strategy have grown and, particularly since the construction of the wall, protests have slowly started to multiply again.[7] Yet, the shift away from official collective politics—in particular from party politics, which had been a major mobilizing force for popular resistance activism during the First Intifada—is also apparent here. Protests tend to be ad hoc and unplanned; they are rarely centrally coordinated and mostly lack unified leadership.

Causes of the disintegration of the popular resistance scene in Palestine today are to be found in the disillusionment of most Palestinians people, men and women, with PA politics, but more so in the continuously tightening of omnipresent Israeli occupation policies aimed at repressing Palestinian resistance. The Israeli occupation policies of fragmentation, separation, and mobility restrictions have systematically dispossessed, occupied, and destroyed Palestinian living spaces, breaking up Palestin-

ian territory into several unconnected and isolated cantons. Such policies of spatial control are rooted in and informed by the Zionist myth of "a land without people for a people without land" (see Hanafi 2009, 119) and thus part of Israel's long-term settler-colonial policies of unilateral separation and Palestinian territorial dismemberment (Falah 2005, 1341).[8]

The Oslo Agreements split the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C, with each having its own administrative and security arrangements. Israeli spatial control has increased after 2000. In 2002, Israel embarked on the comprehensive invasion of the West Bank, institutionalizing policies of house demolition, mobility restriction, and destroying existing Palestinian institutions and infrastructure. The invasion, referred to as Operation Defensive Shield, resulted in massive economic losses and the spurring of de-development in Palestine (Roy 2004). That same year, construction began on the illegal apartheid wall. In July 2013, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2013), OCHA, reported that 62 percent of the wall was completed, 10 percent under construction, and 28 percent planned but not yet constructed. About 85 percent of its route is inside the West Bank, so the wall effectively annexes most fertile lands and Israeli settlements to Israel. Following the election of Hamas in 2006, Israel intensified movement and access restrictions, enforced a blockade on Gaza, and drastically reduced its use of Palestinian labor. In September 2011, OCHA identified in the West Bank 522 roadblocks and checkpoints, as well as an additional 495 ad hoc flying checkpoints each month (on average) that obstruct Palestinian movement (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2011).

These Israeli policies of spatial control (the wall, closures, curfews, checkpoints, roadblocks, earth mounds or trenches, etc.) have severely damaged the Palestinian economy (Roy 2004), society (Johnson 2006), and also political organization and action (Taraki 2008). Restrictions of mobility have limited contact between activists, making it hard for them to organize and carry out large-scale events. Among Israelis, only the more radical anti-occupation activists dare to defy the ban for Israeli citizens to enter Area A. The Israeli army also often temporarily imposes stricter controls in targeted areas to prevent Israeli, Palestinian, and international activists from reaching each other and participating in demonstrations.[9]

The army's severe military reprisals—shooting rubber bullets, live ammunition, tear gas, and sound bombs, and cracking down on activists

and their families—has further curbed broad-based participation. The combination of Israel's harsh retaliations with its spatial control policies severely reduced spaces for popular resistance and led many to believe that protests and confrontations with the army are risky and futile. As a member of the Holy Land Trust (HLT), an organization that works to strengthen nonviolent popular protest activism in Palestine, explained in an interview in 2008,

> People are depressed. They would say: "If I go to the demonstration, I will be captured and I will be put in jail, or I will be shot and, in the end, I will have nothing." That is how *everyone* thinks. (HLT int. 2008)

On several occasions, the discussion came up whether the participation of non-Palestinians might reduce the army's violence. This member of the Holy Land Trust, an organization that involves internationals regularly in their work, argued that

> people would also say: "OK, there is an international or maybe even an Israeli person protesting. I know it is a shame that he is protesting while I am sitting at home. But at the end of the day, nothing will happen to this international. If they catch him, they might take him for investigation, one hour, and they will leave him. But a Palestinian might be in there all his life." (HLT int. 2008)

A number of my interviewees, particularly international activists, argued that the participation of internationals, but also that of women, might mitigate the army's military responses. Some said that women are less likely than men to get arrested. This allows them to be more confrontational with the army, making them succeed in defending or even freeing their men from Israeli tanks and soldiers. However, the great majority of activists who regularly participate in protests contested this claim. Im Fuad, a local activist in her fifties who participated in and organized women's anti-wall demonstrations in the governorate of Salfit, stated clearly that the gender composition of protests makes no difference to how the army's reacts:

> If there are only women, it is easier to keep the demonstration nonviolent. It is the young boys that start throwing stones and that might give the army the "reason" to fire. [But in the end] the army doesn't care whether our demonstration is nonviolent or not. They shoot in any case. . . . The army knows nothing about peace and nonviolence. (Im Fuad int. 2008).

Other village women active in the anti-wall protests mostly confirmed her observations. Participation in protest activism is certainly highly dangerous for women, just as it is for men. Sahera's earlier quotation highlights the lack of security and organization in the popular resistance scene in Palestine today, but also the violent and often fatal aggressions exercised by the Israeli army against protestors. Sahera's refugee camp, Aida Camp near Bethlehem, is situated in close proximity to the wall. It has been a major site of military assaults and escalations over the last years—especially since 2015, when the Israeli army intensified its shoot-to-kill policy that has cost the lives of many young activists, also in Aida Camp. Some families thus discourage their sons and daughters from participating in protests and demonstrations. Lama, from Askar Camp in Nablus, whose story about childbirth I recounted earlier, contended:

> Resistance without organization is a mistake. There is no organization in this resistance [today], just someone says that there is the army in the street, so we all go out and throw stones. [In the First Intifada] we were all still very young, [but then] we grew up. Now I got married, I got children—I started to think. I am not prepared to let my boy go out and throw stones so that he dies because of the stone. Not because I reject the resistance, or because I have forgotten about our cause—no, to the contrary: [As a mother] it is within my possibility to start a new generation that is aware, open-minded, that understands and can think right, . . . not just throw stones and sacrifice themselves. The days and nights that I raised my son for eighteen years—how can I forget them, [just] to say that I am defending my land? (Lama int. 2008)

Lama, in line with Sahera, mentions here an important point: the lack of leadership and unity in popular resistance activism today, which also raises risks for participants. For many the risks of participating are simply too high, and their preoccupations are with survival and coping rather than long-term change. In 2008, Suad, a prominent leftist activist I quoted earlier on her rich experience during the First Intifada and in the IWC, summarized reasons for the current political fatigue experienced by many Palestinians:

> What happened is that people's interest [in politics] became less—all people, not just women. We used to go to demonstration in the thousands, but now people worry about the economic situation, there is an increase of poverty, unemployment, loss of hope for peace, the checkpoints, and the daily violations. (Suad int. 2008)

Israeli occupation policies and military reprisals have thus both directly and indirectly curbed Palestinian popular resistance activism. They have also had gender-specific effects, reducing women's participation in protests in particular. Israeli policies stifle activism directly through harsh military repression, spatial fragmentation, and mobility restrictions, as well as indirectly through heightening insecurity (thus enforcing patriarchal restrictions on women's mobility as "necessary" protection from gender-specific violence and potential sexual harassment) and increasing poverty (thus forcing women's preoccupation with issues of survival rather than resistance). In this way Israeli policies have fostered social conservatism and internal fragmentation, raising barriers to female public political action.

Israeli authorities have also engaged the PA in pursuing their policies of fragmentation. The establishment of the PA, as Roy (2002, 9) summarizes, "was not based on Israel's desire to see democracy flourish in the West Bank and Gaza, but on the need to devolve responsibility for controlling Palestinians to a body wholly dependent on and accountable to Israel." Acting effectively as Israel's security operator, the PA finds itself in a position where it has to suppress demonstrations and initiatives that Israel considers violent or oppositional.[10] Since the PA has largely failed to act as a guarantor of Palestinian rights and leader of popular resistance, many Palestinians now reject it as their national representative authority, and many, particularly women, now seek security and protection not from their quasi-state and its official institutions, but from and through smaller sociopolitical units, such as the family, but also local community groups, including women's cooperatives or collectives (see also Taraki 2008).

These grassroots (independent) women's and other civil society initiatives, which win their support through building alternative informal institutions or community support systems, have, however, been actively curtailed by the PA.[11] Perceiving autonomous bottom-up organizations as a threat to their authority, the PA has retained strong oversight over independent civil society organizations, often limiting their political and financial independence. If the PA deems an activity politically or socially provocative (a charge it often levels against women's groups in particular), it tightens control. Some local popular resistance leaders in the villages, including Adnan, told me that the PA has tried to control local protests by, for example, ensuring that local popular committees (*lijān shaᶜbīyya*), which organize the protests at village level, are Fatah

dominated (Adnan int. 2008). Local women's groups, in a similar way, have faced attempts by rival political actors to take over control. Nevertheless, there are several initiatives that try to strengthen, streamline, and coordinate popular resistance. They compete intensely over leadership, practice, and ideologies of popular resistance.

Competition over Popular Resistance

Several actors have put themselves forward as supporters or even leaders of popular resistance. The political initiative al-Mubadara, for example, but also the PA (see, e.g., Stephan 2007), have endorsed popular nonviolent struggle. Additionally, there has been a surge of foreign-funded NGOs promoting nonviolence and nonviolent struggle, as well as grassroots Palestinian organization, often with links to the international solidarity movement, that aim to organize and coordinate popular resistance activism on the ground.[12] Indeed, like dialogue projects and the liberal "peace business," nonviolence and nonviolent resistance have undergone a process of professionalization and NGO-ization in post-2000 Palestine.

Part of the context is that many international funding bodies have in recent years shifted their funding priorities to nonviolence (*lā ᶜunf*). The EU's Partnership for Peace Programme, for example, supports projects that promote nonviolence (see, e.g., European Union 2010).[13] Palestine saw an influx of NGOs that work on promoting, teaching, and raising awareness of nonviolence. These organizations claimed that they are seeking to prevent what in NGO and mainstream representations is often termed a violent radicalization of Palestinian society. But most Palestinians reject such principled nonviolence projects, seeing them as an attempt to tame the Palestinian resistance movement and turning it into an anodyne, project-based nonviolence approach.

On the other end of the spectrum are organizations such as the Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (GPAAWC), a Palestinian NGO with strong international links to the global justice and anti-occupation solidarity movement. Such initiatives do not adopt the foreign-funded approach of teaching Palestinians principled nonviolence (*lā ᶜunf*) but want to mobilize people from all strata of society for popular resistance (*muqāwama shaᶜbīyya*), understood as proactive direct action against the occupation. Although sometimes criticized for dominating local agendas, these latter initiatives receive much stronger support from Palestinian society than NGO nonviolence projects.

NONVIOLENCE VERSUS POPULAR RESISTANCE

The ways in which activists represent and frame their actions for different local, national and international audiences is crucial for broadening support, and relatedly, success. One of the main issues that stirs debate among activists in Palestine is the question over principled nonviolence (*lā ᶜunf*) versus pragmatic resistance (*muqāwama shaᶜbīyya*). This debate is not new. As early as the 1980s, activists like Mubarak Awad, who founded the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence in 1985, argued that popular nonviolent resistance needs to be distinguished from both principled nonviolence and passivity (Awad 1984). At the time, women, particularly those who were involved in doing rather than theorizing popular resistance, seemed to have distanced themselves from the term *lā ᶜunf* (nonviolence). Im Alaa, who is Adnan's wife and has been involved in popular protests since the First Intifada, stressed that the concept of *lā ᶜunf* in her view did not and does not adequately describe her political activism, which, like most village women's, ranges from everyday acts of survival and resistance, educating, raising, and feeding her children in a context of permanent siege and violence, to participation in popular protests and demonstrations:

> My girls grew up with their dad in prison or in hiding during the First Intifada. So it was normal for them that they would join the resistance. This is simply the way of life here. . . . We as women never used the word nonviolence (*lā ᶜunf*). We always used strength (*qūwā*) or resistance (*muqāwama*). (Im Alaa int. 2008)

During the First Intifada, then, people already debated how to discursively frame popular resistance. With the post-Oslo rise of donor projects promoting principled nonviolence (*lā ᶜunf*), this debate has gained new momentum. In a 2002 opinion poll, 80 percent of the interviewed Palestinians approved of a large-scale movement based on nonviolent action against the Israeli occupation, and 56 percent stressed that they would participate in such a movement, noting that they would favor the boycott of Israeli products over direct nonviolent actions. However, more than half also believed that mass nonviolent action will not change Israeli behavior. Just as support for nonviolent action was not matched with strong beliefs in its effectiveness, it did not, for most, entail a rejection of armed resistance (Kull 2002).[14]

Some public Palestinian figures, however, have stressed explicitly that violence harms the Palestinian cause. In a 2002 petition, fifty-five

Palestinian political and academic figures argued that "suicide bombings deepen the hatred and widen the gap between the Palestinian and Israeli people . . . they strengthen the enemies of peace on the Israeli side and give Israel's aggressive government under Sharon the excuse to continue its harsh war against our people" (Al-Quds, quoted in Allen 2002, 39). The petition sparked heated debate in Palestine. Many criticized the signatories, accusing them of following a Western agenda (the EU sponsored the petition), of surrendering to the occupation, or of delegitimizing armed struggle. In particular, popular resistance leaders in the refugee camps denounced the petition as far removed from the situation, needs, and political struggles of ordinary people on the ground (see Allen 2002, 39).

There can be some truth to such charges, but the branding of nonviolent activists as "elitist," "non-resisters" or even "traitors" can also be politically motivated. In reality both "the street" and "the elite" are divided over violence and nonviolence (see Tamari 2003, 4). Such mutual accusations from grassroots "resisters" against the "normalizing elite" and from "intellectuals" against "those who glorify violence" should thus not be viewed necessarily as a reflection of reality, but rather in a context where each group defines its political identity and agenda in contrast to the constructed other with the aim of gaining local or international support (see Allen 2003, 3).

The general tendency among international and Israeli anti-occupation activists is to see nonviolent struggle as inherently positive and denounce—or at least distance themselves from—more confrontational, violent, and armed struggle (see Seitz 2003, 59–61). International funders, in order not to be accused of funding Palestinian resistance, are even more careful to stress their focus on nonviolence as a principle. Yet the fear that foreign-funded nonviolence projects might undermine the Palestinians' legal right to armed resistance as a population under occupation is widespread in Palestine and should be taken seriously.[15] A representative of the GPAAWC analyzed developments in Bil'in, a village near Ramallah where the community together with international solidarity activists has been holding weekly demonstrations against the wall, as well as an annual nonviolence conference:[16]

> In Bil'in the Israelis and internationals control the show. They want to provide *the* example to the outside world of not throwing stones, of a *non*violent resistance. I don't like the word *nonviolence*; I am skeptical. Because it automatically delegitimizes all other forms of

> civil popular resistance, even stone-throwing, as violent and therefore wrong. (GPAAWC int. 2008)

Indeed, most ordinary Palestinians greet nonviolence projects with suspicion, especially if nonviolence is not explicitly framed as a strategy to further the Palestinian national struggle. A trainer from the Holy Land Trust described her experience of promoting a nonviolent strategy with Palestinian women:

> When I would say "nonviolence," they would say: "Ah—OK, you are normalizing with the Israelis." This is the bad interpretation of nonviolence [that prevails here]. (HLT int. 2008)

The term "nonviolence" (*lā ᶜunf*) thus has negative connotations in Palestinian popular discourse; people often use it to describe those NGO nonviolence projects they consider part of a foreign agenda aimed at normalizing, disciplining, and fragmenting Palestinian resistance into nicely manageable NGO projects, preferably with Israeli counterparts. *Lā ᶜunf*, according to nearly all of the grassroots popular resistance leaders I spoke to, constitutes a new fashionable topic in the NGO world, replacing the earlier people-to-people projects, and acting as complementary to other trend topics such as gender or children in funding proposals and applications.

Local groups and initiatives, such as the GPAAWC, but also local activists engaged in anti-wall demonstrations, try to counter-frame their struggle as a more proactive pragmatic strategy. Adnan, for example, stressed:

> We chose nonviolent resistance here not because we are angels, but it is a strategy. . . . We are the victims in this conflict—so it would be stupid to play the criminal and take up arms, as the outside world wants us to. With nonviolent resistance, the world understands us as humans. . . . We resist the wall all together and we do not talk about political or ideological debates. (Adnan int. 2008)

While not denouncing armed resistance categorically, nonviolent resistance activists, such as Adnan, tend to stress that the use of violence harms the Palestinian struggle as it feeds into Israeli and Western misrepresentation of Palestinians as violent and radicalized. At the same time, he wants to make sure that his nonviolent resistance at the village level is presented under the collective action frame of resistance (*muqāwama*),

not principled nonviolence (*lā ᶜunf*), which might be understood and denounced by fellow Palestinians as a Western-imposed, passive strategy. His reference to *muqāwama* resonates more with Palestinian political culture, rallies stronger local support, and achieves broader mobilization than a principled nonviolence approach.

For local popular committee leaders in the villages, this is a straightforward move. But the Palestinian NGOs that receive outside funding have to negotiate constantly between the nonviolence (*lā ᶜunf*) discourse of donors (who do not want to be blamed for funding Palestinian resistance) and the resistance (*muqāwama*) discourse of their local Palestinian publics (who do not want to be accused of normalization, *taṭbīᶜ*). The titles they give to their training packages and projects reflect this balancing of pressures from within and without: the Holy Land Trust, for example, titled one of its women's training sessions "training for nonviolent popular resistance" (*al-muqāwama al-lā ᶜunfīyya ash-shaᶜbīyya*) (HLT int. 2008).

OWNERSHIP OF POPULAR RESISTANCE

Despite the fact that various actors are involved in and compete over defining, owning, and leading the popular resistance discourse and strategy in Palestine, all local village leaders I spoke to stressed that it is mainly them and the village residents who initiate, carry out, and sustain the actual protests. Adnan, for example, argues that his village's local popular committee (*lajna shaᶜbīyya*), which organizes weekly protests, was formed in 2003 without any coordination or support from outside the village. He criticizes these outsiders' claims to ownership and leadership of anti-wall struggles as an attempt to boost their local and international standing and as a way "to use the people as a means to fill their pockets." Even members of the GPAAWC, whom he overall supports and credits for "do[ing] a lot of publicity and bring[ing] our case to the outside world," are, according to him "not the ones doing the work on the ground. They are good for statistics and numbers" (Adnan int. 2008).

But among the various actors that claim leadership of anti-wall demonstrations it is the PA that is criticized most strongly. Local village popular resistance leaders are well aware of the existing security coordination between Israel and the PA, as well as of the PA's suppression of autonomous popular initiatives. They thus consider the participation of PA officials in protests a mere hypocritical publicity show. Many village leaders pointed out to me that the PA had never shown much interest in their past resistance actions before they had reached and gained fame

in international circles.[17] The media account given by one of the local leaders summarizes this critical assessment of the PA's role in post-2000 popular resistance well:

> The PA has lapsed in its responsibilities toward all the villages west of Ramallah generally and in fact, in the entire West Bank. Its failure has been abnormal and unnatural. Right now, whatever efforts the PA makes are focused on Bi'lin. I don't see the PA's media outlets mentioning anything other than Bi'lin. . . . [Before the elections, we] went to a huge rally in Bi'lin, and there were many members there from the Legislative Council holding signs for candidates; they knew there would be cameras. Even in Friday prayers they were smirking at each other. I am sure that had there been no legislative council and local elections approaching, we wouldn't have seen a single one of them. (Ayed Morrar quoted in Audeh 2007)

For Taghreed, a women's activist in her fifties from East Jerusalem whose critical views on joint peacebuilding initiatives I quoted earlier, it also was clear that the problem is one of leadership:

> The problem on the micro level is that the Bil'in experience was only recently exported to Nahalin—but from Nahalin it is not going anywhere. Qalqilya is not revolting as a community against the wall; Azzoun and Izma are not resisting together as communities against the wall. Why? There is something wrong. Why do these beautiful resistance examples not get exported so that they become national? There is something lacking here: the leadership. We are still suffering from the leadership that is in power. It is not just at the government level; it is also at the NGO level. The corruption is not only at high level, and it is not just money—it is management corruption. (Taghreed int. 2008)

The fact that several actors at local (the popular committees at village level), nongovernmental (NGOs, such as the Holy Land Trust or the GPAAWC), official political (the PA as well as political initiatives, such al-Mubadara), and international levels (global justice movements, e.g., the International Solidarity Movement, ISM) have claimed ownership over discourse and practice of popular resistance in Palestine today, therefore, does not signal the emergence of a unified strategy. To the contrary: it speaks to fragmentation and localization and must be seen as the result of political rivalries over leadership and funding in today's Palestinian popular resistance scene. Women's popular resistance contains similar rivalries, but also has its own gender-specific dynamics.

Women's Popular Resistance: Organizations and Methods

Adnan, in many of our meetings, stressed the important role that women played in the protests in his village. One day he explained to me:

> You have to convince people that it is not shameful (*ʿeib*), but the right thing for women to participate. Not by telling them, but by setting an example and going to the demonstrations with your own family. My whole family participated, and I used to take my little boy on my shoulders in the front line. This way I convinced people in the village, and particularly the men, to let their women take part. (Adnan int. 2008)

Women in Adnan's village indeed participated in the anti-wall protests, thus claiming their space in the public sphere, a domain often seen to be traditionally reserved for men. Public demonstrations in Palestine, and in the broader Arab world, have witnessed strong female participation.

Yet when women poured into the streets of Cairo, Tunis, and other cities in the Middle East and North Africa to support the popular uprisings from 2011 onward, many commentators seemed surprised. They analyzed women's spectacular participation in public political protests as an exception, often arguing that cultural or religious restrictions were, until that point, holding them back. Such culturalist depictions continue Orientalist legacies; they represent women in the Arab world as passive victims of "cultural" oppression and ignore their strong and continuous participation in social and political struggles, be it historically in anti-colonial and independence movements, or in the Arab revolutions in the twenty-first century. Women were integral parts of the independence movements not only in Palestine against British and Israeli rule, but also in, for example, Egypt at the beginning of the twentieth century and in the Algerian war of independence against French colonialism (see, e.g., Al-Ali 2012, 28). Nevertheless, the question of whether, when, and how women might face specific "cultural" restrictions in their public politics continues to dominate the debate.

In Adnan's village, most women I spoke to stressed the historical continuity of their public politics and entirely rejected such Orientalist imagery of politically passive Arab women. Adnan's wife, for example, emphasized that resistance is "a way of life here [in their village]." Other women, too, stressed that they were not held back by "cultural" forces in their political activism, and even identified the egalitarian and praxis-oriented nature of

resistance and protests as mobilizing for women. During a focus group with eight women of different age groups from the village, all highlighted the close relations, trust, and equality among protestors:

> We set a very good example, with everyone participating in the resistance. It was all very practical and everybody participated as volunteer. There were no personal aims. All the women in the village knew that [Adnan's] wife and his daughters and sons participate in the resistance, and therefore they also went. (Focus Group B int. 2008)

Local activists like Adnan want to rebuke the associations of nonviolence and nonviolent resistance with the elitist or Western agenda of normalization, as well as its reputation of being male-dominated. They therefore stress its inclusive nature. Adnan explained that by adopting a pragmatic, nonideological approach, he was able to bring together supporters from different political parties (including Hamas), age groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and genders in his village's local popular committee. Some scholars agree, arguing that nonviolent civil action is especially attractive for women because it constructs inclusive collective identities and is less hierarchical than conventional political arrangements.[18]

Adnan's village might not reflect the gender dynamics of other popular resistance contexts in Palestine, though. Some women activist leaders I spoke to stressed the need for separate women's organizations because they found that women faced difficulties in participating in gender-mixed demonstrations due to male control over organizational structures. Several women groups and organizations have already sprung up. Women's protest politics, like the broader post-2000 Palestinian popular resistance scene, is organized and supported by local, national, and international groups. It is, however, often more informal, its networks more loose, and its mobilizing mechanisms more community oriented than men's. The main organizations to call for, claim leadership of, and participate in female popular protest range from local groups, political parties, and NGOs to international solidarity groups:

- *International women's solidarity groups*, such as the International Women's Peace Service (IWPS), a group of international female solidarity activists, provide support for local women, document human rights abuse, and encourage particularly women's involvement in protest action.
- *Political initiatives and parties*, such as al-Mubadara, but also the women's branches of leftist parties, such as the Palestinian

Women Working Society for Development (PWWSD), encourage women's involvement in popular protest action and also sometimes organize women-only demonstrations.

- *NGOs*, such as the Arab Educational Institute (AEI), the Palestinian Conflict Resolution Centre Wi'am, the Holy Land Trust (HLT), or the Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (GPAAWC), have formed specific women-only groups in which they train, encourage, and mobilize women to participate in popular resistance.
- *Local women's groups*, sometimes linked to popular village committees, also organize women's involvement, particularly in anti-wall protests.

In 2003, local women from West Bank villages targeted by the wall founded the network Women Against the Wall. GPAAWC supported the women by providing specific training courses on the boycotting of Israeli products, popular resistance, and protest methods. A representative of GPAAWC clarified in a 2009 interview that the idea of the network

> is that in the future there should be a women's branch to each of the popular committees in each village. . . . The rationale for founding the network was that women and youth have no role in the popular committees, which are dominated by men, by farmers, or by politicians of the village. Women's points are not listened to properly, but they are actually the ones doing the job just as men. For example, some women complained that they were marching in the front rows, while the leaders of the popular committees were in the back of the demonstration, giving interviews to journalists. (GPAAWC int. 2009)

His point was confirmed by several women activists I spoke to. Feryal, a grassroots popular resistance leader in her fifties, told me in several extended interviews and informal conversations that she had struggled to challenge control from political and patriarchal sources in her home governorate of Salfit. In one of our conversations, she vividly conveyed the initial confusion that dominated the arrival of the Israeli soldiers and the building of the wall in her village:

> No one really knew what was going on when they came to build the wall. There was no proper information given. (Feryal int. 2008)

Feryal subsequently and quite ad hoc decided to organize a workshop for women with lectures on popular resistance methods, similar to the

ones organized by GPAAWC. Her aim was to recruit women for the next demonstrations. The first two demonstrations in 2003 were indeed mainly attended by the women she had recruited and trained.

But later, Feryal explained, once more people started to join and the protests attracted more attention, men from the local popular committee and political parties attempted to take over:

> They wanted to delegitimize us [women] by saying that we work with the internationals. . . . Men always want to be responsible and take the lead in the demonstration, just as they do anywhere else. (Feryal int. 2008)

Local male leaders then started organizing their own demonstrations, but their efforts, as Feryal told me, were soon thwarted by factionalism and rivalries:

> The problem was that now everybody wanted to take the credit for the huge mobilizations of people that *we* [the women had] achieved! (ibid.)

Consequently, many, in particular women, no longer wanted to participate in the demonstrations, which, according to Feryal, had turned into performances and publicity shows of party politics. They no longer presented unified anti-occupation activism. Feryal stated clearly that she does and did not "want to work for any political party. I want to work for Palestine!" The local village women then decided to form their own women's anti-wall group, breaking away from the control of the popular committee and political factions. This initiative to form an independent women's anti-wall group stemmed from the village women's urge to challenge, circumvent, and perhaps even transform gender hierarchies in the local popular resistance movement in their governorate. These women, instead, tried to build a more inclusive and egalitarian organization that would guarantee and safeguard women their place in the popular struggle. Feryal put it clearly:

> We didn't want to be involved in this fighting. Our women's group is for everyone, no matter which political affiliation. (Feryal int. 2008)

Feryal's group later developed into a small women's cooperative organization (*jamᶜīyya*) that strives not only to mobilize women for civil protest acts but also to empower them economically (through supporting women's small income-generating projects) and socially (by providing guidance on personal status law issues, e.g., women's inheritance or

divorce rights). The fact that village women pushed for the establishment of a separate women's protest group that later developed into a more formal organization and also addressed social gender issues shows that peasant women are not in need of "uplifting" by the urban NGO elite that tends to target village or refugee women in their—mostly foreign-funded—gender empowerment projects. In fact, village and refugee women often are more active than urban women in protests and resistance (especially since the wall runs largely through rural areas), and they also combat male control, both individually and collectively, through their activism.

Yet, not all local popular resistance initiatives developed in the way that Feryal's in Salfit did. Often the initial spontaneity remained. In most villages, women are neither mobilized much in advance, nor through women's or other organizations, to protests and demonstrations. Ilham, a single peasant woman in her late forties, recalled a spontaneous mobilization to her first demonstration in her village near Ramallah:

> We protested the first time when the Israeli army came here and brought bulldozers. It was in the night—people were sleeping. They put a guard at the entrance of the village and they didn't allow anyone to leave their houses. . . . So us, the women, we all went down and we faced them. We wanted to resist them. They were sitting on the bulldozers. We fought with them and looked them eye to eye. We were just with stones. They fought with bombs and bullets and teargas, and they were hitting us. Then one of the soldiers came closer to me and started cursing, shouting, and hitting me. One soldier spoke Arabic and he told me: "Put your hands up!" I told him: "No—thank you. . . . We will stay here until our deaths." (Ilham int. 2008)

Ilham's account questions, and exposes as false, the claim put forward by different organizations, NGOs, political parties, the international solidarity movements, and also the PA that they initiated, led, and deserve credit for mobilizing women's civil resistance. In fact, it is mostly through such informal family and community structures at the village level that local women are motivated and recruited to participate in—mainly ad hoc and spontaneous—direct action against the Israeli army.

Women make use of a variety of methods in protesting. In the informal, often unplanned, and gender-mixed protests against the wall, women mostly engage in more conventional popular resistance methods such as demonstrating, raising banners or the Palestinian flag, shouting slogans,

or blocking army tanks and bulldozers. But many of the women-only activities organized by NGOs rely on more gender-specific and symbolic political practices. The Arab Educational Institute (AEI), for example, has organized women-only protests next to the wall where women hold prayers or sing Palestinian songs, often dressed in traditional attire. International solidarity networks, such as the IWPS, support women's olive harvesting and farming on annexed land. Local village women, in their more informal ad hoc activism, also sometimes make use of creative and symbolic protest techniques, such as silent marches, walks with candles, and women's ululating. More spectacular women's or feminist forms of protest, such as when women activists in 1983 entered the military base in Greenham Common using the notion of motherhood and dressed as teddy bears to protest militarization (see, e.g., Kirk 1989; Laware 2004), or when female activists in Code Pink employ political street theatre and symbolically rely on the color pink to publicize their views (Kutz-Flamenbaum 2007) have, however, not been employed by women on a large scale in Palestine.

Palestinian women also play a specific role in the boycott of Israeli goods, as Taghreed explained:

> It is a woman's decision to encourage and educate her children [about the boycott]. That is also part of women's resistance, and that is what we can do as women. Even on the Israeli side women can tell their children not to buy products that are produced in settlements, because settlements prolong the occupation and make us, as mothers, and [our] children suffer. So there is some kind of resistance that women do without any bloodshed and even without much effort. It is more about awareness and education. (Taghreed int. 2008)

As educators, women ensure that the boycott is followed not only in the family but also at the community level, reminding (and also controlling) other women to adhere to it. Im Fuad from Salfit, who worked together with Feryal in organizing women's anti-wall demonstrations in their district, for example, told me that the women in their small women's cooperative (*jamᶜīyya*), which developed from the women's anti-wall group, check on one another and the broader community not to purchase Israeli goods. More recently, after the brutal Israeli 2014 assaults on Gaza, and also as a result of the rising importance of the BDS (Boycott, Divestments, and Sanctions) campaign, the boycott of Israeli products had gained much ground in Palestine. Many women I spoke to during my recent visits to Palestine stressed that they would neither buy nor allow

Israeli products in their homes and would encourage their friends and family to do the same.

At both the level of organizations and that of actual methods employed in popular resistance, Palestinian women are thus taking crucial and decisive roles. For women, another level—that of representations and framing, that is, how their acts of resistance are presented to a wider public—is also of utmost importance.

Gendered Representations of Women's Popular Resistance

Some, mainly nonlocal, media and other popular accounts still uphold the narrative that Palestinian patriarchal social and cultural norms prevent women from participating in popular resistance. Such accounts often put the spotlight on the Palestinian female protestor, presenting her—preferably visually through photos or films—as an exception, as the one who challenges not only Palestinian patriarchal restraints, but also the universally commonly held association of women with peace and nonviolence.[19] As such, the female resistance protestor offers a convenient media figure through which international attention can be attracted. Women activists themselves are aware of the assumptions and expectations set upon them by different audiences. They even sometimes make use of them, as an international solidarity activist explained:

> It is nonsense to say that women are more peaceful than men. But nevertheless, we can make use of this. Even when dealing with the Israelis, it is easier to be a woman. We are not seen as dangerous. . . . It is easier for women to get closer to the soldiers than for men. Also, as women, we can always play the naive little girl. (Mariam int. 2008)

Women use different representations in order to link to, be heard by, or even trick specific audiences, but gendered framings, of course, also demarcate boundaries, delegitimize others, and bolster political power. In today's context of heightened insecurity, rising social conservatism, and strong political fragmentation and competition between different groups, women's bodies and their behavior have become even more the battlefields on which political rivalries are played out. The discourses that female protest activists use to represent their public protests, as well as those used by their opponents to delegitimize them, thus deserve further attention.

Although only very few of my interviewees claimed that patriarchal cultural aspects are to blame for women's reduced participation in protests (all agreed that the Israeli occupation constitutes the main obstacle), some used this argument occasionally to fuel internal political rivalries. At least half of the secular, mainly urban-based, women leaders of NGOs or women's branches of political parties I interviewed, for example, blamed increasing restrictions of women's political actions on the rising influence of the Islamic movement. Supporters of this argument claimed that Hamas brainwashed women into voting for them in the 2006 election by promising socioeconomic support, but that in reality they were used as tokens and have no say in decision making.

Such arguments are factually incorrect—the Islamic women's movement has large constituencies of women both in the West Bank and Gaza, and its female supporters have played significant roles in strengthening the movement (see Jad 2005). Moreover, the fact that very similar critiques were also launched against the nationalist-secular Fatah (mainly by women of the leftist factions, as well as those sympathizing with the Islamic movement) should unmask this rhetoric and reveal that its aim is to delegitimize political opponents. Depending on their political leaning, women (and men) would brand either the Islamic or the nationalist-secular groups as patriarchal, accusing them of tokenism and only symbolically and sporadically granting women access and decision-making power.

A similar dynamic was evident between urban and rural activists. The great majority of urban middle-class (and mostly professionalized NGO) leaders found conservative patriarchal "traditions" in the rural areas to be a crucial factor barring women's public political agency. Village women, or activists working predominantly in rural areas, however, stressed that peasant women have a long history of active involvement in the resistance. Salwa, a young feminist activist who has a higher education degree in gender studies and now works with women in a village in the Hebron district, for example, argued that

> in the cities, women are the least empowered. Their husbands are rich and they can therefore put more pressure on their women. He can put her in the house and say: "I give you everything, so you don't need to go out." . . . In villages, women have to go out and they have to work. They have to feed their family. They are very strong. (Salwa int. 2008)

In the focus groups I held at Adnan's village, the women also stressed that "in the village, women are stronger than in the cities. We are more used to hard work here" (Focus Group B int. 2008).

The often-upheld generalized differentiations between secular and religious, or between town, refugee camp, and village, are constructed by activists to define boundaries between them and others, and to maintain power hierarchies, but they do not necessarily reflect the actual reality of women's activism. Village and camp women as well as those sympathizing with the Islamic movement tend to emphasize their active involvement in the resistance (*muqāwama*), contrasting their own authenticity and resistance to what they perceive and present as the Western-influenced normalization (*taṭbīʿ*) agenda of urban secular leaders. Urban secular leaders, on the other hand, tend to cling to a modernization paradigm, claiming to be following a more progressive and modern social and political agenda, and stressing the need to eradicate what is deemed to be backwardness, and to uplift peasant and religious women in order to free them from patriarchal traditions (see also Jad 2004b). Women activists thus often present their social and political struggles by discursively situating them within the constructed binaries of tradition versus modernity, authenticity versus Westernization, rural versus urban, resistance versus normalization, and secular versus religious. Indeed, activists use (and merge) two binary pairs of femininity constructions in particular.

The first pair consists of the two constructions of femininity that have already historically been prominent in Palestinian political culture: the (more relational, and often dubbed traditional) mother figure, associated with peace and steadfastness (*ṣumūd*), on the one hand, and the image of the (more independent, and often claimed to be modern) female political activist, more strongly connected to protest and resistance (*muqāwama*) on the other. The second pair juxtaposes the religious activist (who finds legitimation in reference to strong female Islamic figures) with the secular rights–based activist (promoted strongly in international solidarity activism as well as among the elites of the urban-based women's movement). These two binaries do not reflect the actual, much more complex, realities of women's lives; they are discursive one-dimensional representations only. Very often women merge and combine them into new creative female political subjectivities. I illustrate the ways in which Palestinian female resistance activists use, merge, and negotiate these two binary framings of traditional versus modern and religious versus secular below.

MOTHERS DEFENDING THEIR LAND AND PEOPLE

When I asked Ilham what drove her to regularly participate and play such a leading role in the protests against the wall, she said,

> Everyone, including women, has to resist as much as they can. If they had resisted that much [as we did in our village] in 1948, then perhaps it would have turned out differently. . . . We women help the national cause and our men—what should they do without us? . . . I told the other women that they have to defend their husbands and their sons, because what should she do if the soldiers take them or if they die? She needs them. (Ilham int. 2008)

Her participation in the protests, together with that of many other women in the village, illustrates the important role women have played in Palestinian popular resistance, also after the First Intifada. Their roles, certainly, were not and are not confined to that of weeping mothers lamenting the loss of their loved ones as often portrayed in mainstream media accounts.

Yet, the gender construction of mother holds strong resonance and remains important in women's framing of their acts. The more traditional imagery of the steadfast mother is central to Palestinian political culture.[20] Nationalist steadfastness (*ṣumūd*) discourses politicized (and continue to politicize) discourses of motherhood, elevating women as social, cultural, and biological reproducers of the nation (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997). But "mother politics" (Cockburn 2007) is also practiced by women themselves to open up spaces for their own political agency. The overwhelming majority of Palestinian women I spent time with or interviewed, particularly those not involved in official politics, related their everyday political activism to their nurturing role as mothers. In such mother politics, they politicize the domestic sphere by presenting their domestic duties and reproductive roles as a form of political activism, and domesticate the public sphere by basing their political activities and entry into the public sphere on their domestic role as mothers (Peteet 1991, 175–203).

Most ordinary women stressed that as mothers they consider it their responsibility to take part in political action in order to ensure that they can sustain and support their family, community, and nation. Women protesting against the wall tended to frame their mobilization in terms of survival, and even defense of the community. Ilham, for example, stressed that she had no other choice but to protect her land:

> If the soldiers come and take my land—that means that I have nowhere to live. I have no home. So what can I do? I have to go out and defend my land. (Ilham int. 2008)

Women protestors argue that as mothers they need to not only maintain and keep intact the social fabric of society, but also defend their means of subsistence to ensure survival. By underscoring that she has no choice but to fight for her land, which provides her with her means of survival, Ilham decisively lays emphasis on and discursively establishes the important role that she plays, as a woman, in the household economy—a role traditionally associated with the male breadwinner. She discursively challenges the gender construction of the male provider, and relatedly the gender regime that this figure holds intact.

But Ilham's earlier quoted statement, that "everyone, including women, has to resist as much as they can," also points to another femininity model, different from the "traditional" mother figure. She here constructs an image of the "modern" female political activist who takes an active and independent role in the resistance. The way she continued her statement—asserting that "if they had resisted that much [as we did in our village] in 1948, then perhaps it would have turned out differently"—must be understood as a strong criticism of the male Palestinian leadership. By arguing that women must not only defend the land, but also their men, Ilham questions the capability of male leaders to fulfill their socially expected role as protectors. Many women voice such criticism. Some go even further than Ilham, and contrast their very proactive role in the resistance with what they perceive to be a passive, impotent role of male leaders. Describing the rationale behind her participation in the Beit Hanoun march, Um Ahmed Kafarna, for example, a Hamas activist in her forties, told the *Guardian* that "it was a way of encouraging women to do something. We did something that the Arab leaders couldn't do" (quoted in McCarthy 2006). Similarly, Shireen from Tulkarm Refugee Camp introduced herself to me as a sister of a martyr and resistance activist, but at the same time she insisted that

> there is no difference between men and women. Women can even be stronger: in politics and as resistance activists. (Shireen int. 2005)

Sympathetic male activists also often credit women for their courageous acts in protecting their land and people. Ayed Morrar, a popular resistance leader from Budrus village, for example, stated in an interview with the Electronic Intifada:

> We have photos of the first demos here, and it was the women who were stopping the bulldozers. And this happened more than once in

> Budrus, and they succeeded in getting to the bulldozers before the men did. They were lying down in front of the bulldozers. I haven't seen similar participation by women in any other location. (Morrar quoted in Audeh 2007)

Framings of popular resistance often hew close to social gender norms that associate femininity with nonviolence or motherhood in order to garner public support. But female activists' actual protest practices constitute a challenge to patriarchal gender norms that reduce their active role in the resistance to that of passive victims. In their political practices, female resisters encroach on political spaces—those of public politics, proactive resistance, protection, and defense of land and people—that are traditionally controlled by men and associated with masculinity. As the example of Ilham highlights, and also that of most other women, this challenge takes place most clearly at the level of practice, by women invading and taking over political spaces traditionally defined as male and masculine. But Ilham and others also challenge male leadership in a discursive and remarkably straightforward way. Female resisters like her publicly articulate the important political, social, and economic roles they play—as women—in Palestinian everyday life and resistance.

Palestinian female popular resistance activists cannot eliminate the potential danger of mother politics, which, through its reliance on the mother figure, can offer patriarchal nationalist forces a discursive strategy with which they can deny women's active agency in the national struggle and relegate them to the home. Nonetheless, Palestinian women activists use mother politics in a proactive and challenging way, constructing, enacting and defending new provocative and hybrid female political subjectivities, that is, new, alternative subaltern counterpublics: that of the traditional yet modern mother activist.

THE "RELIGIOUS-SECULAR" FEMALE ACTIVIST

Another strategy employed by female protestors to garner social support is to borrow from Islamic discourses when framing their acts. Ilham, like many other women I spoke to, referred to the Prophet's wife, Khadija, as an Islamic example of a strong resistance woman:

> Men might say it is shameful (*ᶜeib*) for women to join the demonstration. Why would it be shameful? We want to resist. We want to defend our land. In the times of the Prophet, Khadija also went to fight. So it is wrong to say it is shameful. Why should it be only natural for men?

> Women help men in their resistance, and women are just as strong. (Ilham int. 2008)

Ilham is not an active member or even supporter of the Islamic movement. Thus, her reference to religion, although employed to support her political agency, is not ideological, but rather stems from her everyday practice of Islam. Female activist leaders, like Feryal, might use Islamic principles even more strategically. She explained to me how she contested male activists' claims to leadership of the anti-wall protests in Salfit:

> In the demonstrations I took the loudspeaker twice and said through it: "Allahu Akbar—let's go to jihad!" As a result, everybody came out to see and join. They wanted to see this woman who is saying "Allahu Akbar" and calling for jihad. At the same time, this was their language, so they felt more ready to join. . . . I use Islam to mobilize people. When they hear Allahu Akbar, they know it is something important and they come out of their houses to see. (Feryal int. 2008)

Feryal, who had originally presented herself to me as a convinced communist and as someone who had been attacked by Islamic groups for her activism during the First Intifada, thus employs Islamic slogans strategically: tapping into the normative systems and discursive repertoires of ordinary village women, she hopes to mobilize them and legitimize their political action. Moreover, given that the Islamic movement has tended to present itself as last guardian of resistance, stressing also women's active involvement in the resistance (*muqāwama*) and contrasting that to what they denounce as the Western-influenced normalization (*taṭbīʿ*) agenda of urban secular leaders, Feryal's usage of Islamic vocabulary also responds to and carefully maneuvers through today's political rivalries in Palestine. Her discursive strategizing relies on borrowing from different discursive repertoires, merging these to construct hybrid alternatives. This highlights that realities and lived experiences never can be as neat as political narratives try to suggest through their construction of clear-cut binaries between us and them, between religious and secular camps, between modern and traditional women, between Islamic and secular political activists, and so forth.

The image often juxtaposed to the Islamic movement supporter—that of the rights-based secular activist—is in fact similarly emerging from political developments over the last decades, and it is also often combined with Islamic symbols. The rights framework has gained currency as a result of the increasing influence of the international solidarity movement

on the ground. Today many female activists, not only those in urban-based NGOs, but also those at village level and active in the Islamic movement, bring up secular human and international rights discourses to explain their activism.

Many of my research participants from lower socioeconomic and rural or camp backgrounds framed popular resistance activism within the discourse of rights. In contrast to the more professional urban women leaders, their rights language remained, however, vague, and they seldom made references to specific UN resolutions or aspects of international law. They also sometimes—in contrast to the more secular NGO elite—merged their secular rights language with reference to Islam. Feryal, for example, regularly spoke of her, and her people's, rights as Palestinians, as women, as the occupied. But at the same time, as her earlier quotation illustrates, she used Islamic references to reach out to women in her governorate.

Women thus employ and merge several discursive repertoires and femininity constructions in their popular resistance activism: the mother figure, rights-based language, religious references, and they embed all of these within the frame of proactive *muqāwama shaᶜbīyya*. The "mother politics" employed by local female popular resistance activists, therefore, needs to be carefully distinguished from both the maternal care-based approach of joint peace projects (e.g., that of the Families Forum discussed in chapter 1), as well as the mainstream rights-based framework of the globalized peacewomen elite (exemplified by the International Women's Commission, also discussed in chapter 1).

Although popular resistance activists combined their rights-based language with the relational gender constructions of the mother, they—in contrast to the maternal care-based approach in joint Palestinian-Israeli projects—clearly prioritized their national identity (and rights) as Palestinians over their gender identity. They stress that they view themselves first as Palestinians who have been denied their rights and only secondly—and mainly strategically—refer to their alleged specific traits as mothers or women. Popular resistance activists selectively appropriate transnational rights discourse, but this should not be understood as signaling support of the mainstream two-state solution agenda or maternal care–based bonding across the national divide. Rather, it offered grassroots activists a way to connect to the global justice movement, providing them with channels through which they could make their voices heard and understood internationally.

Some find that there is also a negative effect to the increased significance of international solidarity movements: many Palestinians now

consider organized demonstrations a mere performance in which Palestinians play the role foreigners expect of them. Lama, in her usual critical attitude, put that skepticism aptly:

> [Protests] have become now in our society like rituals, like a wedding or a birthday party. . . . All year we stayed silent until World Peace Day on 20th September. So then Peace Day comes and what do we have to do? A group of Palestinians has to go stage a sit-in at the wall in Nahalin, another group of Palestinians has to go and stage a sit-in at the wall in Gaza. But what about the rest of the year? Between Peace Day 2008 and Peace Day 2009? What have we done? Nothing. This is a real shame. (Lama int. 2008)

Jean-Klein (2002, 45–54) in her analysis of "political audit tourism" during the First Intifada had already then detected that "local currents of political and social activism [were] shown to be subject (partly subjecting themselves) to close-up reviews by 'transnational' solidarity activists on whose fellow-activism their own 'modernist' struggle depended."[21] Since now international media and international solidarity groups even more strongly support, focus on, and review local popular resistance activism, local demonstrations, and protests more frequently turn into rituals for international audiences. The performative element of protest action, namely, the fact that it is often performed and presented in specific ways to please different audiences, becomes particular apparent in representations that stress gendered aspects of protests. Those in international circles often tout female nonviolent activism as a modern, gender-equal, and civilized way to do politics.

It is therefore not all that surprising that local activists, when framings their political actions, tend to selectively merge and borrow from varied local, national, and international repertoires of secular (human and other) rights, mother politics, and Islamic discourse. This eclectic strategy stems from and responds to a very complex situation on the ground. It is a defiance, rather than reinforcement, of false rhetoric binaries and, as such, offers alternative, unconventional political imaginaries ahead.

Conclusion

The shifts the Palestinian popular resistance scene has undergone since the Oslo Accords have opened up several opportunities but also constraints for female activists. Israeli settler-colonial policies and the PA's hierarchical and patriarchal nature directly suppress women's participation in protest

action. They have also fostered political inertia and stronger social conservatism that restrict women's public political actions more indirectly. The increased internationalization of popular nonviolent resistance has had ambiguous effects too. Foreign funding targeted to principled nonviolence (*lā ᶜunf*) has stirred competition in the field, further fragmenting and thus weakening the movement. Although cultural restrictions to female popular resistance are minimal, different political actors nevertheless instrumentalize such gendered cultural references to define collective identities, demarcate boundaries, and delegitimize rivals by accusing them of Westernization, traditionalism, or normalization (*taṭbīᶜ*).

The ways in which activists represent their (and their opponents') politics is crucial. This is particularly true for female activists, whose political actions undergo public scrutiny and risk being undermined even more than men's. Female activists have to carefully navigate between often competing agendas: framing their activism as principled *lā ᶜunf* gains funding but might lead to local alienation; practicing and presenting it pragmatically as popular resistance (*muqāwama shaᶜbīyya*) brings activists local credit but might freeze foreign funding; couching their public political agency as mother politics guarantees societal acceptance, but might not be effective in challenging restrictive gender norms in the long term. Women also use the more independent gender construction of female political activists, borrowing selectively from Islamic and secular rights discourses and sometimes presenting their activism as inclusive, progressive, and modern. Female activists thus challenge established norms of female (and also male) political agency in Palestine both through their actual resistance practices and through their hybrid framings, in which they rely on, selectively merge, and break the binaries between traditional versus modern, foreign versus culturally authentic, secular versus religious, or normalization versus resistance. It is because of rather than despite this careful hybrid discursive strategizing that they are able to construct "subaltern counterpublics" (Fraser 1992, 1995), navigate through local, national, and international norms, and build stronger platforms.

How do these radical antagonistic ways of doing politics function as "subaltern counterpublics" in Fraser's (1992, 1995) sense? According to Fraser's post-liberal critique of Habermas's (1984, 1987, 1989) conception of the liberal public sphere, subaltern counterpublics exist in both stratified societies (i.e., where systemic inequality persists) as well as relatively egalitarian societies. She defines three characteristics:

(1) a postmodern conception of the public sphere must acknowledge that participatory parity *requires not merely the bracketing, but rather the elimination, of systematic social inequalities*;
(2) where such inequality persists, however, a *postmodern multiplicity of mutually contestatory publics is preferable* to a single modern public sphere oriented solely to deliberation;
(3) a postmodern conception of the public sphere must countenance not the exclusion, but *the inclusion, of interests and issues that bourgeois masculinist ideology labels "private" and treats as inadmissible* (Fraser 1995, 295; emphasis added).

Fraser's first point—the need to target and eliminate rather than bracket inequalities—stands out clearly in Palestinian women's popular resistance. Although so far they have brought about only minor changes on the ground, Palestinian women's (and men's) popular resistance practices of political dissent, such as anti-wall demonstrations, strive to dramatically draw attention to, subvert, and resist colonial power structures and injustices. As a radical, yet democratic, act of dissent, women's popular resistance runs counter to the conventional, conformist liberal political practices that have been normalized in the Palestinian context. Decidedly different from joint peace initiatives, dialogue, negotiations, NGOs, and voting, popular resistance starts from, theorizes, and frontally attacks colonial power structures, rather than bridging, bracketing, and possibly concealing them.

Fraser's second point—the need for "a postmodern multiplicity of mutually contestatory publics"—also becomes apparent when studying the very wide range of how women do politics in Palestine today. Women's popular resistance counters Habermas's liberal conception of a single, unified, and gender-neutral public sphere geared toward deliberation. Women's radical protest actions, and the ways in which they narrate and represent their political acts, reveal that the public sphere is not homogenous, singular, inclusive, democratic, or egalitarian. Rather, it consists of social, political, cultural, and economic power relations that structure women's (and men's) access to and maneuvering within public spheres. Women, when negotiating through this matrix of intersecting gendered, classed, urban-rural, and colonial power relations, build multiple subaltern counterpublics: they participate in demonstrations, protests, sit-ins; they use sometimes gender-specific methods such as dress or song; or

they form women-only associations to combat male control over the public sphere in a collective way. Their subaltern counterpublics are multiple, and they are also contestatory. Not all women do politics in the same way, nor do they all agree on the ways in which politics should be done: some organize as mothers, some as independent female activists, some use human-rights language, others couch their activism in religious language. Most, if not all, however, employ a mix of different methods and frames so as to be able to respond to and deal with the complex and rapidly changing political dynamics on the ground.

Their ways of doing and narrating politics reflects the matrix of different, shifting, and intersecting power structures in which their agency takes place. Political (in this context colonial, between colonizer and colonized, but also between different Palestinian political factions), gendered, and class power structures not only constantly change, but also influence the ways in which women can do—and *actually* do—politics in Palestine. Consequently, Palestinian women's counterpublics are multiple (women do politics in a variety of ways), hybrid (they mix different gendered discourses), shifting (they spring from women's specific and changing positioning within broader structures), and contestatory (they compete with each other). While Habermas's conceptualization seems to entirely overlook this dimension, Fraser's model of subaltern counterpublics integrates power, dispute, and radical disagreement as units of analysis.

Fraser's third point—the need to integrate "interests and issues that bourgeois masculinist ideology labels 'private' and treats as inadmissible"—puts focus on women's discursive reckoning with male-dominated gender regimes. Just as nineteenth-century North American women used allegedly private notions of motherhood or domesticity as springboards for their political activism (see Fraser 1992, 115), Palestinian women rely on the notion of motherhood to access and appropriate public political spaces. By giving these so-called private idioms new radical political meanings, they express "oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (Fraser 1995, 291) and, in doing so, challenge established political norms and cultures. Of course, neither women's publicly articulated claims to defend land and people (and thus their implicit questioning of the gender hierarchy of male protector and provider), nor their invasion of traditionally male-dominated political spaces through their public protests constitute a strategic feminist agenda to transform gender regimes. But their repoliticization and simple enactment of a femininity construction that portrays women as courageous, heroic citizens chal-

lenges both the nationalist-ideological reduction of women to wombs, as well as the liberal feminist essentialization of women as nurturing peacemakers.

Such a challenge can be a first step toward embodied political claim-making. The study of women's popular resistance activism, particularly their *embodied* protest acts, allows us to refocus our analytical lens from speech to practice, and, more specifically, to the *body*. Liberal theory, in particular the Habermasian, relies on communicatively and discursively competent, rational, but bodiless subjects (see Alway 1999). While the body is not much problematized in Fraser's work either, it is central to other feminist scholars' work (see, e.g., Alway 1999; Butler 1990/2006; McNay 2014). These scholars' insights highlight that for women popular resistance holds particular, gender-specific, meanings: with their public protest actions, women challenge existing political and gender norms not through speech, deliberation or dialogue, but through embodied practices. Cockburn (2007, 177) explains this specificity: "For women, because of the way women are often reduced to the body and routinely sexualized, putting the body in play has a special meaning." The way Adnan described to me women's participation in the protests in his village reflects Cockburn's point:

> It was the first time that we saw women playing the role of the *hero*. It was clear that now their role is more than just to cry after their lost ones. Women were resisting together with the rest of us. They were very active in the front lines. (Adnan int. 2008)

His recognition of women's embodied and proactively practiced heroism also needs to be analyzed in light of the gendered physical violence that Israeli soldiers regularly commit on the bodies of male and female protestors. Julie Peteet (1994) argues that during the First Intifada beatings and detentions have been reformulated by Palestinians as rites of passages into manhood for Palestinian male youth. Bodily violence is not as central to constructions of femininities, but it does, nevertheless, shape how women formulate their political claims:

> Women frame their physical violation as evidence of their equality with men and wield it to press their claims—"We suffer like men, we should have the same rights," quipped one former prisoner who had undergone a lengthy detention and was tortured during interrogation. While the violence visited upon males credentializes masculinity that

> visited upon women *indicates a potential equality of citizenship*. (Peteet 1994, 44; emphasis added; see also Peteet 1991)

Women thus performatively enact political discourses of, and claims to, citizenship; "[the body] does not only serve as a medium for change but also realizes it" (Sasson-Levy and Rapoport 2003, 399; see also Butler 1990/2006; Sparks 1997).

Using their bodies as shields to defend their land, their means of subsistence, their family, community, nation, and men, Palestinian women not only resist the Israeli occupation, but also performatively enact new political subjectivities and make embodied political claims. By dramatically putting their bodies on the line and publicly demonstrating that they experience, endure and resist violence just as much as men, women reject the narrow binary association of the heroic life of public action and politics with men and masculinity, and the everyday life of nurturing and care with women and femininity (see, e.g., Elshtain 1987; Enloe 1989). Doing so, they unsettle the exclusivist association of citizenship (and related rights) with the courageous male citizen, and instead imagine, construct, and enact alternative gendered political subjectivities.[22] Although citizenship remains theoretical in Occupied Palestine, female popular resistance must thus be understood as a crucial antagonistic democratic practice through which women, if not achieve, then at least make political claims for their equal rights as citizens.

CHAPTER 3

Women's Everyday Resistance and the Infrapolitics of *Ṣumūd*

"Yes, we came here to enjoy!"

In a discussion group with around fifteen participants, mainly women, from different backgrounds (but socioeconomically among the better-off) in Bethlehem in 2007, I asked what *ṣumūd*—which translates as steadfastness or perseverance—means to them.[1] In their initial answers, women related their *ṣumūd* mainly to the land: "to stay on the land," "not to sell our land," "to stay here even though there are many problems," "not to emigrate," "to host people from all over the world," "to stay even though we are suffering," "to bear what is happening, to stay on [our] land, not to leave it" (Focus Group A int. 2007). Nationalist discourse, both in its everyday usage and in more formal politics, celebrates this understanding of *ṣumūd*—but there are many more meanings to the term, which became apparent in our subsequent and more elaborate discussion. Toward the end of the meeting, one participant summarized and explained:

> *Ṣumūd* is *amal* (hope) and *ᶜamal* (work/action). We need action, and we need hope for there to be action.

This chapter focuses on this double meaning of *ṣumūd*: a proactive survival strategy resisting the material effects of Israeli settler colonialism through continuous daily *ᶜamal* (work/action), and an ideational strategy of maintaining *amal* (hope), thus resisting the colonization of the mind.

Classic liberal political theory, including its liberal peace agenda and the Habermasian public sphere model, tend not to address small-scale daily actions, whether of *ʿamal* or *amal*. More generally, political science has, until recently, tended to adopt a top-down approach to "the political," focusing on and prioritizing high-level governmental political action, while considering the everyday separate or irrelevant for political or social change. Studies on peace and conflict are no exception.[2]

Of course, anthropologists and sociologists have long acknowledged the local and everyday as an important site that not only bears traces of power and policies, but also reacts to, challenges, and gets by and around these power imprints in various, often unrecognized, but nevertheless political ways (see, e.g., Bourdieu 1977; Certeau 1984). Scott (1997, 323), for example, famously wrote that "so long as we confine our conception of *the political* to activity that is openly declared we are driven to conclude that subordinate groups essentially lack a political life, or that what political life they do have is restricted to those exceptional moments of popular explosion. To do so is to miss the immense political terrain that lies between quiescence and revolt, and that, for better or worse, is the political environment of subject classes." For Scott, politics and resistance thus are not confined to openly declared public acts, let alone to rational speech acts and deliberation in the Habermasian sense.[3] As such, Scott's paradigm offers fruitful entry points for studying the everyday survival, coping, and resistance mechanisms that people adopt in times of conflict. Countering liberal top-down policies, such a perspective can help us to "look at both the habits of everyday life and the practices of conflict management that existed before the conflict but also the manner in which these practices have been altered, and the emergent capacities that have developed as a direct result of the conflict" (Gilgan 2001, 7).[4] Responding to Gilgan's call, I try in this chapter to better understand how ordinary Palestinian women understand and practice resistance, peace, and politics in their daily lives.

Rosemary Sayigh also has urged that more scholarly attention be paid to women's everyday life, and specifically to Palestinian women's *ṣumūd*:

> We need to take account of actions that are not directly political, but, by being carried out in a particular place and time, carry political charge, for example, carrying on lives in conditions like those of Israeli occupation or in camps in Lebanon. The unique difficulty of the Palestinian struggle, its imbalance of forces, makes *sumoud* (steadfastness, staying

> put) an essential form of resistance on a level with political and military struggle. In addition, Palestinian women have been in the fore focus of institution building, social work, and cultural production. To focus then only on "organized" women would be to miss these other kinds of struggle. (Sayigh 1992, 4)

In contrast to women's peacebuilding and their participation in popular resistance, described in the two previous chapters, *ṣumūd* is a more covert, often individual and non-organized struggle. The term can cover a wide variety of acts ranging from more materially based survival strategies (e.g., finding employment, staying on the land and not emigrating, continuing to tend occupied agricultural land, and engaging in small-scale income-generating projects to provide livelihoods), through cultural resistance (by upholding traditions, folkloric songs or dresses, and other customs), to social and ideational resistance (e.g., by maintaining a community's social fabric, hope, and a sense of normality).[5]

As a strategy concerned particularly with preserving subnational affiliations, loyalties, family, and community life as safety and support networks, *ṣumūd* has been associated especially with women's daily struggles.[6] Raja Shehadeh, writing in the 1980s, for example, found that women, as a result of their gender-specific suffering from (interlinking) social and political oppression, have unique potential to lead strategies for change:

> The women have the hardest time with the occupation. Most of them must sit quietly at home and suffer the weight of their men's hurt pride as it comes down on to them. And this weight can be suffocating. . . . But I sometimes think that those few women who manage to survive this are the strongest of all samidin and it is they who will finally lead the revolt. . . . Perhaps it is the slow, deep flames of those women who do survive that will keep our sumūd alight, for it is they who know the patience and perseverance we need. Their flame is used to very little oxygen—the men's harsh, bright fire is much weaker. (Shehadeh 1982, 115)

Shehadeh here points out that, with their daily acts of steadfastness, women struggle against multiple discriminatory forces simultaneously: they persevere through continuous daily work to ease the material destructions caused by the occupation, but they also deal with and try to counteract the ideational effects (humiliation, despair, depression) that occupation policies cause in Palestinian society.

Often it is women's task to establish some form of normality, some normal life, in this abnormal situation of political occupation, daily violence, and settler-colonial exploitation. *Ṣumūd* thus is gender specific, a point that Suad, whose experience in the leftist women's committees during the First Intifada and later the IWC I discussed earlier, also emphasized:

> I think that women shoulder a lot of *ṣumūd*. . . . In the current economic situation a lot of people don't have work. Men often are frustrated and don't care anymore. They want to sleep, to smoke, etc.—so then, in many cases, women start to think how they can go out and provide protection and security for their children. Women have to be more practical . . . because they are responsible for the house. (Suad int. 2008)

Nearly all of my female interviewees stressed women's more pragmatic sides. Many referred to their male kin's inability to provide, but they also stressed their own innovativeness in finding new ways to feed their families and provide them with a functioning home. In the Palestinian context of permanent siege, violence, and de-development, the classic gendered division of labor thus has been overturned, and women have effectively been assigned a multitude of roles: they are not only responsible for the maintenance and protection of the house and household economy (a role traditionally assigned to the male breadwinner) and even take over a protective role defending their land and people from Israeli violations and incursions (a role commonly associated with the male protector), but they also need to provide the social glue that holds the community together by nurturing hope and taking care of their family's emotional and psychological needs.

The burden on women's shoulders to manage everyday life has increased over the last decades. The occupation has deepened and hardened its grip on Palestinian everyday life, and what is internationally known as the Oslo "peace" process has made life in Palestine only more unbearable. This bleak context has intensified most Palestinians' disillusionment with official politics as their preoccupation had to shift to the concerns of everyday subsistence and survival. Trying to simply get on with life has also meant for many Palestinians to focus on the here and now, but also on the ideational—that is, on maintaining their own mental spaces, independent and alternative to the assaults and impositions of the colonizer. Taking a closer look at these post-Oslo everyday political subjectivities and forms of agency thus is crucial in order to understand how women do politics in Palestine today.

I start this chapter with a short historical overview highlighting how practices and discourses of *ṣumūd* have evolved, particularly from the First Intifada to after Oslo. The main part of this chapter is divided into two sections, dealing, first, with women's everyday resistance at the material level of *ʿamal* (work), and, second, elaborating the discussion on their ideational resistance at the level of *amal* (hope). In both sections I position women's everyday resistance within the wider web of systemic power structures—political, economic, social, and cultural—in which they occur. But while the first section aims to shed light on the material dimensions of control, be they through Israeli spatial control or patriarchal restrictions on women's lives, the second zeroes in more closely on how women resist and cope with not the restrictions themselves, but the effects that these were intended to have on their and their community's bodies and minds. Underlying the analysis is an engagement with the theoretical discussion on everyday resistance, in particular with the debate on recognition and intent as a criterion of the political: Should acts that do not have explicitly expressed political intentions, and are not recognized by others as such, qualify as political? Is everything political?

My ethnographic material in this chapter is drawn in particular from four cases—all women who have already been introduced: Ilham, Amal, Najla, and Karima. The four of them are—just as all other Palestinian women—involved daily in everyday survival and resistance acts of different kinds. I concentrate on these four women to capture not only the wide variety that women's everyday struggles can take but also their specific, and qualitatively different, modes and functionings. Doing so, I hope to provide context-specific insights into the complexities of female everyday political agency: while often understood within the dichotomies of resistance versus accommodation or normalization, such agency is in fact much more ambiguous.

From Suspension to Affirmation of Life

The shift in post-Oslo Palestine toward the informal and the everyday—to survival, coping, and leading a normal life—has been accompanied by a resurgence of the debate on the meanings of *ṣumūd*, and more specifically the dispute of what counts as normalization or accommodation (*taṭbīʿ*) versus resistance (*muqāwama*). Is living normally in the abnormal situation of the occupation a submission to the status quo of injustices, or is the stubborn insistence not to give up, not to emigrate, and instead to stay

put under such harsh circumstances an act of resistance in itself? Many of my interviewees stated that today in Palestine "to live is to resist" or even "to exist is to resist." Women, in particular, often used the terms *muqāwama* or *ṣumūd* to describe their everyday survival and coping acts. There has thus taken place a significant change in the everyday political culture of *ṣumūd* over the last decades—a shift from *ṣumūd* as "suspension of everyday life" during the First Intifada (Jean-Klein 2001, 84) to *ṣumūd* as "affirmation of life" today (Junka 2006, 426).

But *ṣumūd* has a much longer history in the Palestinian political landscape and has undergone important shifts, both in official and informal politics, before. Until the mid-1970s, it denoted a strategy closely related to the land and agriculture and one that, in contrast to armed struggle, could be practiced by every individual.[7] From the 1970s onward, *ṣumūd* gained importance as an official political strategy, when the PLO institutionalized it through Arab *ṣumūd* funds, promoting *ṣumūd* as complementary to armed struggle (*niḍāl*) (Lindholm Schulz 1999; Tamari 1991). In the institutionalized PLO *ṣumūd* agenda, the term was suggested as a political strategy to halt the mass exodus of Palestinians from the occupied land, find alternatives to their growing dependency on Israeli economy, and counter Israeli expropriation of and control over their land. This agenda was, however, soon criticized by Palestinians, particularly inside the occupied West Bank and Gaza, for not resisting but merely prolonging the status quo of occupation, and for reinforcing the external PLO elites' power over the burgeoning internal leadership (see Tamari 1991).

During the First Intifada, *ṣumūd* was reconceptualized from its static PLO-institutionalized sense of holding on to the land to a more active form of everyday resistance. While of course the First Intifada is known for its spectacular mass-based acts of popular resistance, running in parallel to these public collective protests (*muqāwama shaʿbīyya*) was the covert politics of *ṣumūd*, demanding steadfastness and endurance from all Palestinians. People engaged in what Jean-Klein (2001) has termed "self-nationalisation," carrying the national steadfastness into the realm of their everyday lives by boycotting Israeli products, not paying taxes, refusing to sell land, and even discontinuing life rituals, joyful events, and celebrations. Resistance steadfastness demanded that life as usual be suspended and sacrificed for the greater nationalist cause. Time for normality and pleasure was only to come once independence had been gained (see Jean-Klein 2001, 94). But some, particularly those from lower

socioeconomic classes, such as Lama, who lived in Askar Refugee Camp in Nablus during the First Intifada, struggled to conform to the pressures placed on them by the resistance:

> During and after the First Intifada, there was a lot of unemployment and the majority of people depended on the workers' union. Most used to have work inside Israel, but the leadership of the intifada didn't allow them to work in [Israel]. It wasn't easy. If [the men] didn't get a permit, they went illegally to their work (*taḥrīb*): either they sneaked around the Green Line or they went through the sewage pipes. Also women went illegally. Older women used to work as cleaners. They jumped over the blockades to enter Israel or Jerusalem to get money for their kids. It wasn't easy. . . . Palestinian women were very ambitious to push their children [to participate in the resistance] to the utmost extent possible: "You mustn't put your head down! You mustn't give up! Keep your head up high! Participate in the Intifada so that our family is like this or that person's!" We couldn't afford to be different from them, because they were considered to represent all the grandeur, the glory of the nation (*waṭan*), the land, our blood, the martyrs, and all that. (Lama int. 2008)

Resistance steadfastness thus could amount to social policing. It was not only self-initiated, but sometimes people also felt forced into participating in a collective movement that in fact could have contradictory effects on their lives, particularly for those who could not afford to stop working inside Israel or selling Israeli products. There was also a specific gendered dimension to the call for "suspension of everyday life" (Jean-Klein 2001, 84) during the First Intifada: since "self-nationalisation" was targeted predominantly at the informal and everyday site of people's lives, it was largely women's unofficial social networks that suffered and were suspended. I return to this issue below, trying to further unpack the complex dynamics between women's everyday resistance against the occupation and the impact this might exercise on social power structures.

After the Oslo Accords, *ṣumūd* discourses and practices continued, both at the level of the political leadership and among ordinary people. Official PA discourse used *ṣumūd* to describe the developmentalist political program of state, peace, and institution building. Critics, such as Edward Said writing in 1995, however, were skeptical:

> One of the things that haunts me is that . . . we've only been able to think in terms of survival, steadfastness, *sumud*. We haven't turned the

> corner to think in terms of actually winning, which is quite a different thing. To stay in one place, in order not to lose what one has—that's very important and to a certain degree we've done that. We've remained a Palestinian people despite all the deprivations and the pressures and the Declaration of Principles and so on. There is a Palestinian national consciousness which is there. But we haven't been able to find a mechanism or a method or a politics for converting dispossession into repossession, for converting defeat and loss, which is really the history of the last forty-five years, into something resembling an actual victory. (Said in Said and Rabbani 1995, 70)

Said understood the "peace" process, the Declaration of Principles, and the two-state solution, as stagnation, not development. Meanwhile, the PA continued to cherish *ṣumūd* as the preservation of "authentic" Palestinian culture and tradition, embodied by the steadfast peasant mother (*aṣ-ṣāmida*), to forge a strong sense of national identity. Said and other critics, similar to earlier skeptics who rejected the PLO's institutionalized *ṣumūd* program, interpreted the PA's official developmental *ṣumūd* agenda as a conservative, elitist program of accommodation, not one for victory or change.

In 2018, several years after the Second Intifada and with the prospects for peace- and state building shattered, it is clear that the PA was not able to implement and realize its developmentalist *ṣumūd* policies. Most ordinary people have lost confidence in the leadership and have also stopped First Intifada community practices of "self-nationalisation" and "suspension of everyday life" (Jean-Klein 2001, 84). While in the early years after Oslo people started to resume normal everyday life, hoping that the Oslo "peace" process would implement the structural conditions enabling them to do so, they now strive for normalcy and everyday pleasure for the opposite reason: people opt for an everyday strategy of "affirmation of life" in the here and now, because in their context of everyday settler-colonial violence and occupation the future, in any case, appears unstable and unpredictable (Junka 2006, 426).[8]

A significant redefinition of the infrapolitics of *ṣumūd* has thus taken place over the last decades. Palestinians now increasingly argue that simply carrying on a normal joyful life and affirming life despite the destruction, death, and frustration around them constitutes a form of everyday resistance. Carrying on a normal life under occupation can take various material and ideational dimensions. It can be practiced though *ᶜamal* (work) and *amal* (hope), with each of these forms of everyday

resistance differently affecting different structures of power. The following two sections analyze these two levels of *ṣumūd* and their bearings on power.

ʿAmal—The Infrapolitics of Work

Direct and structural violence hits women hardest, and women are also overwhelmingly the ones who must find ways to cope with both the physical and psychological destructions caused by war (Cockburn 2004; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009). In this section I focus on Palestinian women's survival strategies for coping with the destruction that the Israeli occupation causes, in particular, at the material, physical level. Women's responses are multiple and depend on their specific contexts; they include managing to provide food, housing, work, health care, child care, and so on, and finding ways to maintain—to the extent possible—a normal ordinary everyday life for themselves, their family, and their community. With a great number of men imprisoned, killed, or harmed by the Israeli occupation forces, Palestinian women have had to take on significant roles in sustaining the household economy.

Men's employment has declined sharply since 2000, following mobility restrictions and destructions caused by the Israeli army's invasion of the West Bank, Operation Defensive Shield, and the closure of the Israeli labor market to Palestinian workers (see, e.g., World Bank 2010).[9] Nearly 60 percent of working-age Palestinian men were unemployed as of 2007, and those who do have employment work mainly in the informal sector, in small-scale businesses. Their income is neither a sufficient nor a reliable source for the family economy. In response to male retreat from the labor market, women's economic activities have expanded to meet household needs. Palestinian women's participation in the formal labor force grew slightly from 14 percent in 2000 to 16 percent in 2007, but it nevertheless remains among the lowest in the world (World Bank 2010, viii). These statistics, however, say little about women's actual participation in the household economy. Women's work is mainly informal, low-paid, and unprotected, and, as such, hardly captured in such statistics.

To generate supplementary family income, women sneak secretly into Israel to reach jobs there or to sell their goods, fruits, and vegetables; they find ways to access their farmlands; they open small-scale enterprises for home production of food, livestock, embroidery, or other goods; they join charitable organizations or voluntary work associations; they

establish money-lending circles with friends and community; and they support family businesses. But all of these activities are overwhelmingly considered an extension of women's household activities, thus not falling into the category of "proper" paid work. Women mostly engage in unpaid and unrecognized labor at the margins of the informal economy (World Bank 2010, 32). Their work in agriculture, farming, and livestock rearing makes up a large part of that.

Statistics show that a great majority of village women have become major tenders of the farmland. Men's employment on farms has decreased from 32 percent in the early 1970s to 12 percent in 2008. Women also had to move out of agriculture, but this happened much more slowly. In 1970, 57 percent of women in the labor force were involved in agriculture, dropping to 30 percent by 1989, and reaching 30.7 percent in 2008 (World Bank 2010, 18).[10] As rural men were first integrated into the Israeli labor market and then became unemployed, rural women continued working on the family farms. Since much of women's agricultural work counts for many as an extension of housework, thus remaining largely unpaid and unrecognized, the percentage of women farmers is probably even higher. Agricultural work is a major area through which women have tried to maintain the family economy and livelihoods (World Bank 2010). Ilham's case provides a good example.

ILHAM

Ilham, cited in chapter 2 on her popular resistance activism against the wall in her village near Ramallah, is a peasant woman in her late forties. She lives a modest farmer's life, residing in the house of her paternal uncle. Most of the male members of her family are unemployed, imprisoned, or dead, and it has consequently been left to her and her mother to continue the agricultural work on their lands. Ilham also has livestock, but the main source of subsistence for her family is provided by their lands. With the construction of the wall, a large part of her family's lands has been annexed and is now on the other, Israeli, side of the wall. Guarded by soldiers, the wall prevents her from accessing these parts of her family's farmlands. Only sometimes does she manage to pass through a small gate in the wall and reach her lands. When crossing over to the other side, she often is caught by Israeli soldiers. For example, she said,

> When we [the village women] went there [to the wall], they [the Israeli soldiers] said that we are not allowed to access the fields. They said it

> is a military zone of the army. We said that we just wanted to work on the field and get the harvest. But they said, "No, it is forbidden!" All of my land was lost. Wheat, olives, onions, chickpeas, beans—everything just went. (Ilham int. 2008)

She, like other villagers, also tries to farm her remaining land more intensively: "We still have the land of my grandfather. We eat and drink from that. My brother also gave us some land. Now we live from that land—all of us."

Ilham has always played an important role in maintaining the family household. Her father died when she was still young.

> They [the Israeli army] killed my father when I was twelve. He was just fifty-two. They shot him straight through the heart. Directly. I saw him there lying in all the blood. I went crazy. So then my father was gone. We [my mother and me] went to Israel to get work. We were working and feeding the others. By God, I exhausted myself, and my mother, too—she was exhausted. My oldest brother was eighteen, and he was doing his *tawjīhī* [high school exams]. We did all this work and we got older—and after all that they [the Israelis] just come, take our land, and we can't eat. They came here and imposed themselves on us and then they put the wall. What can we do? (*Shū bidnā nsāwī?*). (Ilham int. 2008)

Her account shows that, although men were and are socially expected to fulfill the role of breadwinner and provider, in reality women often play a major—but often quiet and unrecognized—role in maintaining the family economy. Ilham, similar to many other women I spoke to, acts as main provider in the family, and even contributed to financing her brother's education. In the current situation, however, after increased restrictions have been imposed by the Israeli government since 2000 and particularly after the construction of the wall, she finds it much harder to persevere and invent economic strategies to support her kin:

> Now, that the Israelis put the wall, everything is forbidden. [Whenever I go to the annexed farmland] the soldiers tell me to go back to my house. But I refuse and I insist that I will pick my olives. They threatened to shoot me if I enter, but I said, "OK—*yalla*, go ahead. It's better that I die here." There is a door in the wall where we can pass through. This year we went to pick the olives and the soldiers were guarding this door. It was hot and we needed water. They didn't want

> to let us back through and started hitting us. I hit them back—if only we had weapons like them, but we only have stones. This is our land on which we grow our food—just that, nothing more. (Ilham int. 2008)

Ilham, like all other village women I spoke to, is prepared to fight for and defend her land. Peasant women's intensified role in agriculture to maintain the family household also results from the fact that sometimes women can access their fields more easily than men. Many peasant women I spoke to claimed—and largely were supported in this claim by their unemployed husbands—that it is easier for women to sneak around Israeli-imposed barriers. But of course access is never guaranteed. Ilham only very rarely manages to pass through the gate in the wall that separates her from her land. She either crosses secretly or negotiates with the Israeli soldier guards to grant her temporary access. Overall, however, she has lost her lands as a reliable and sufficient source of subsistence.

Given the dire situation, women often turn to the support structures of their extended family and community. Ilham, for example, told me that

> now that [on the whole] I cannot reach my land and I cannot feed my family, I have to take from other houses, from my father's family, from my mother, or even from neighbors. (Ilham int. 2008)

In the absence of state support, informal community structures are often the only networks left to sustain the family economy.[11] My interviews confirm what other studies (e.g., Taraki 2006; Johnson 2007) show: that women are vital in upholding and reviving these informal support structures. Many village women organize collectively to reduce costs, maximize production, and guarantee more protection. They establish money-lending circles to support each other; found small-scale organizations (*jamᶜīyyāt*) for food production, processing, and selling; and even organize groups to enter Jerusalem together without a permit to sell agricultural products in the Old City so that they reduce costs for travel and are safer (Amani int. 2009). Left in a vacuum and abandoned by official institutional support systems, informal family and community networks have thus been revived.

Many women exchange coping techniques with one another. In the discussion group in Bethlehem where I discussed meanings of *ṣumūd* with the participants, women were trying to outdo each other on their innovations. One said:

> [During curfew] we had long periods when there was no electricity, so everything in the fridge was destroyed. The soldiers were shooting into the water tanks, so we had no [running] water. We had no [running] water, no electricity, and no telephone line—what could we do? When the water in the tanks was finished, we always had an alternative and got water from the well in the garden. . . . When all the food in the fridge went off and we had nothing left—what could I do? I started to bake cakes [on the gas stove]. I baked a cake every day, all throughout the curfew for forty days we ate cake. (Focus Group A int. 2008)

Her narrative provoked laughter from the whole group. The other women found the baking story funny, but also representative of their own somewhat surreal and tragicomic situation and tactics under curfew. These cases provide a glimpse into the various and widely diverging coping techniques that women are inventing to ensure family survival under prolonged occupation, when curfews and sieges close down their everyday lives.

One of the major themes dominating women's survival acts is the loss of control over their land and space. Not only have many lost their major source of subsistence, their farmlands, but they are also unable to reach work, send their children to school, keep alive economic ties between rural and urban areas, and meet friends, family, and kin (and thus sustain informal support networks). Women's survival techniques after 2000 thus reveal spatial policies as one of the main areas in which Israeli control has intensified.

ISRAELI SPATIAL CONTROL TIGHTENS

Israeli settler-colonial policies take not only physical, but also institutional and administrative dimensions. Israeli authorities maintain tight control over the movements of goods, people, and resources, and, having fragmented the West Bank into a set of social, political, and economic cantons, they interfere into Palestinian men's and women's everyday lives. The spatial dismemberment of the Palestinian community has severely damaged Palestinian economic opportunities, such as employment (Roy 2004); social practices, such as marriage patterns (Johnson 2006); as well as political organization and collective action, which have, as discussed in chapter 2, become increasingly fragmented and localized (see also Taraki 2008).

Women tend to relate their attempts of temporarily regaining control over the land to two interpretations of *ṣumūd*. First, they use the "older"

understanding of *ṣumūd* as a strategy to hold on to the land: "to stay on the land," "not to sell our land," "not to emigrate" (as participants in the discussion group in Bethlehem initially did). Yet, as detailed earlier, this discourse of *ṣumūd*, particularly in its institutionalized PLO or later PA form, often faces criticism from Palestinians for offering only a passive and deterministic strategy ahead (see, e.g., Said in Said and Rabbani 1995; Tamari 1991). Those calling for more action-oriented popular resistance through protests, demonstrations, or boycotts argue that a passive institutionalized *ṣumūd* strategy might merely prolong the occupation by functioning as a self-imposed humanitarian relief program.

Such land-related framings of *ṣumūd*, however, had a different meaning in the 1980s and '90s. Now, with violent Israeli settler-colonial policies intruding far more into Palestinian everyday spaces, we should not devalue people's everyday acts of defying this violence—by, for example, accessing or moving across the land—as a passive remaining on the land. Hammami (2004), for example, argues that the most common form of Palestinian *ṣumūd* against the occupation today is "getting there." This new meaning of *ṣumūd* is decidedly different from its original understanding of staying there, staying put. Now it stands for something more proactive. "Its new meaning, found in the common refrain, '*al-hayat lazim tistamirr*' ('life must go on') is about resisting immobility, refusing to let the army's lockdown of one's community preclude one from reaching school or work" (Hammami 2004, 27). Gaining control and using the occupied space through the "mere" movement of "getting there" is a way to survive, and for many this insistence on carrying on with life constitutes a form of proactive *ṣumūd* as *ʿamal* (work/action).

To understand women's spatial acts of resistance better, Scott's (1990) analysis on the recognizability of what he terms "infrapolitics" or "hidden transcripts" is useful. Scott stresses that people might need to purposefully obfuscate their everyday acts. In contrast to symbolic popular resistance that aims to draw attention to discriminatory structures, covert everyday resistance sustains itself through exactly the opposite: it hides from view and wants to remain unrecognized in order to protect the resisters from repression and maintain the effectiveness of their acts. Palestinian women in a similar way deliberately hide from the Israeli authorities their everyday resistance of "getting there." Their acts of sneaking through the gate to reach their farmland, or into Jerusalem to sell vegetables, must remain hidden to maintain their effectiveness. Certeau's (1984) notion of everyday "tactics" can grasp the spatial and temporal aspect of women's infrapolitics even better:

> The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. . . . it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing." Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into "opportunities." The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. (Certeau 1984, xix)

With their *ṣumūd* acts, women never directly challenge, but rather find ways around the restrictions imposed on them by the occupation. Their gains are temporary and small-scale: although Ilham might have managed to convince the soldiers to allow her to pick her olives today, she must negotiate access to her annexed farmlands tomorrow all over again. Similarly, while women invent a multitude of different ways to cope in times of curfew, often relying on informal community and family networks, their acts do not constitute a collective long-term strategy. Women do not (and do not claim or intend to) challenge material manifestations of the occupation by sneaking through the wall to access their farms or by baking cakes in times of curfews. With their tactics, and as the disproportionally weaker actor, women cannot realistically revert Israeli policies of spatial control. They can only trick the much more powerful Israeli authorities, gain temporary access to their occupied spaces, subvert power structures from within, and use them for their own good.

"Romanticizing" (Abu-Lughod 1990b) women's everyday survival techniques as effective political resistance against the Israeli occupation thus only obscures a deeper understanding of the functioning of their acts. The fact that women with their survival and coping acts do not intend to directly challenge, let alone change, political oppressive structures might mean that Scott's prioritization of intentionality in everyday resistance acts is not applicable to the complex and often ambiguous context of occupation and settler colonialism in Palestine. Scott, following classic liberal political theory, maintained that resistance must be an intentional act, and even specified that intent is a better marker of resistance than outcome (Scott 1985, 290). But Palestinian women's material survival acts are not intended as long-term political resistance strategies; they are tactics with which women can only temporarily circumvent settler-colonial policies. They are ad hoc, improvised, and, most of the time—although women do also frame them as resistance (a point I return to below)—they are

devised first of all out of mere economic necessity without much broader political meaning or demands attached to them.

Yet, although women might not necessarily have intended to act politically, that does not mean that their acts cannot constitute or should not be analyzed as political acts. Asef Bayat has criticized Scott for his implicit subscription to the liberal rational choice model. Instead, Bayat finds that "the 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary,'—a silent, patient, protracted, and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive hardships and better their lives" often starts without specific political meanings, intentions, or agendas attached to it, but is justified on moral ground (Bayat 1997, 7; see also Bayat 2010, 56).

Intentionality thus might not be the best marker for everyday resistance. Sometimes acts that start off without specific political intentions or aims develop into more strategic and collective political and social movements over time. For example, in many of the villages encircled by the wall, women at first tried to find ways to access their lands individually, but when later they became involved in confrontations with soldiers this triggered more collective acts of resistance or even small-scale movements. Similarly, as I was told (Amani int. 2009), women sneaking into Jerusalem to sell their products at first did so individually, but then they organized in a more collective way, with a hired mini bus driver, arranged stay-over, and so on.

These everyday *ṣumūd* acts are closer to Bayat's (1997, 2010) understanding of ordinary peoples' "quiet encroachment" on the powerful, but also to Singerman's (1995) analysis of *shaʿbī* informal politics in Cairo. Singerman questions the scholarly emphasis placed on intentionality:

> The important variable in this discussion is not whether a man or woman "intends" to act politically but whether his or her *actions, individually or cumulatively, actually influence the political order, the distribution and redistribution of public goods and services*. . . . Individual strategies to accumulate savings, provide education for a child, or migrate abroad, when repeated thousands of times, influence the macro allocation and distribution of scarce resources and public goods, as well as political and economic phenomenon in the nation. Everyday decisions add up incrementally to create the boundaries and interests of the political and economic order. (Singerman 1995, 7; emphasis added)[12]

Palestinian women's spatial everyday forms of resistance in a similar way add up to effect broader transformation gradually and over time Most of the women I spoke to did not, at least in the beginning, understand their defiance of Israeli mobility restrictions as outright political acts; they were only doing what they thought was most urgent and most important to do. But their acts often increased their political consciousness, evolved into broader collective arrangements, and could even trigger overt popular protests. These largely economically motivated acts thus swept over into the political, and they also, as the following section will show, influenced (and were influenced by) social dynamics within Palestinian society.

PATRIARCHAL CONTROL TIGHTENS

Women's everyday *ṣumūd* and economic coping strategies challenge the traditional role of men as providers, but the fact that women often had to step in as breadwinners does not mean that kinship-based patriarchy has been eroded. To the contrary, patriarchal control has increased and taken on new forms: women increasingly fear Israeli gendered violence (e.g., body searches at the checkpoints and sexual assault by Israeli soldiers), against which no protection is available to them. Most of the unmarried girls I spoke to told me of their difficulties convincing their parents to allow them to travel to reach their universities or jobs, since even short journeys hold unexpected dangers for women. As a result, social conservatism and patriarchal oversight have increased; men control women's movements more.[13] Women adhere to established social gender norms, especially modesty codes, so that, in return, they can claim their part of the "patriarchal bargain" (Kandiyoti 1991), putting pressure on men to comply with their role as male providers.[14] And they police how other women conform. Under economic, political, and social instability and insecurity, women thus often can be complicit in reinforcing social conservatism.

One might also ask whether associating women's work of holding on to the land and ensuring family survival feeds into nationalist discourses that reduce women's political contributions to their reproductive, caring, and providing roles. Peteet, writing about Palestinian refugee women in the Lebanese camps, found that "the qualities that characterize *ṣumūd* are also those that are characteristic of femininity—silent endurance and sacrifice for others (family and community)" (Peteet 1991, 153). Associating women and femininity with *ṣumūd*, however, does not necessarily deny

women their political agency It can also have the opposite effect. Najla, one of my key research participants, for example stressed that "women are not victims—they are survivors, they are powerful and continue every day to find different forms of resistance to survive" (Najla int. 2007).[15] She underlined that for her this creativity of finding new ways to resist and survive constitutes a form of *ṣumūd*.

All women I spoke to cherished their innovative survival strategies; they exchange tactics and techniques, and actively help each other. Although they might not explicitly attach political meaning to their coping strategies, they view themselves as active agents when engaging in and devising household and family survival strategies. Their proactive everyday *ṣumūd* discourses and practices thus are not reductive. In their understanding, *ṣumūd* does not confine women to passive victims of the occupation, nor should it be overlapped or confused with the traditionalist nationalist top-down discourse that reduces women to biological reproducers of the nation's male citizens.

Women's economic *ṣumūd* strategies might constitute a first step leading to and triggering more public female political agency, and they might also lead to more feminist-conscious social activism. Although women's initial motivation for devising and practicing *ṣumūd* usually stems from their "female consciousness" of defending and protecting family and community life, it might lead them to develop a more "feminist consciousness" (Peteet 1991, 97). Women who come together in small-scale income-generating organizations (*jamᶜīyyāt*), or find ways to access their land, or sell their products in Jerusalem, of course, are first of all concerned with practical survival issues, but their coming together with other women and their joint defiance of internal patriarchal and external political control over their mobility also heightens their feeling of social and political power and can lead them to tackle more strategic feminist issues.

For example, Feryal's and Im Fuad's small women's association in Salfit, which I write about in chapter 2, first assembled with the aim to mobilize women for protest actions against the wall. When then, however, they were confronted with male opposition in their protest actions, they became more outspoken, pushing for the inclusion of women in protest politics and in the leadership of popular resistance. Eventually the association evolved into a small registered women's organization that supported women not only in political activism, but also in economic matters (through small income-generating projects), as well as in issues

of gender justice (e.g., providing advice on personal status law issues). Examples such as Im Fuad's and Feryal's women's organization illustrate the trajectory Palestinian women's politics can take, and how it evolves on the ground. Women's everyday political practices reveal how closely interlinked economic, social, gender, and political struggles are in Palestine. These linkages, as practiced in women's everyday politics, defy and deconstruct false binaries upheld in classic liberal political theory between public and private; between the economic, political, and social; and between the state and the market.

Amal—The Infrapolitics of Hope

Palestinian women practice the infrapolitics of *ṣumūd* not only on the material level through *ʿamal* (work/action) and practical survival strategies, but also on the ideational level through keeping up *amal* (hope) and trying to lead, as much as possible, a normal joyful everyday life. Particularly, the strategy of keeping a critical, humorous distance to the cruelties of the occupation—such as baking cakes in times of curfew and telling funny stories about it—is adopted by a large majority of Palestinians today. A great majority of my interviewees, particularly those not engaged in formal activism and from lower socioeconomic levels, stressed that since they have little or no control over determining their futures, they prefer to focus on the here and now, affirming and making the best of what they have in each moment.

Marwan, a friend from Gaza, for example, illustrated how people find ways to laugh at the occupation. I had tried to contact him all throughout the Israeli attacks on Gaza from December 2008 to January 2009 but never received a reply from him. Then, on 18 January 2009, the first day of a very fragile ceasefire, he suddenly filled my Inbox with several jokes, including the following: An Israeli arrives at London's Heathrow airport. As he fills out the entry form, the immigration officer asks him: "Occupation?" The Israeli promptly replies: "No, no, just visiting!"

Marwan's outpouring of humor and jokes, coming from Gaza, which had been under constant bombardment and attack for more than three weeks, left me baffled. The "genocidal Israeli attack on Gaza" (Pappé 2009) left more than 1,400 people dead, many more wounded, and a whole population emotionally and psychologically distressed (see Thabet et al. 2009).[16] The attacks in that period—and those that followed—completely destroyed civilian infrastructure services and brought Gaza "to the

brink of humanitarian catastrophe" (Shlaim 2009, 1). In response to my further inquiries about the situation—but also about his jokes—Marwan answered me in a later e-mail:

> About Gaza and the Israeli aggression, believe me it was the worst days in my life, very difficult, ugly, and horrible especially on the kids. Eight windows were broken in my flat. My wife and the kids were in the room and the glass broke on them, but thank God nothing happened to them. Plus, the sound of the explosions with the sound of the F-16 made my kids, and even us, suffer until this moment. My kids now are scared of everything, even if the door [just] shuts strongly from the wind. . . . About [your question of] how we can still make jokes about Israelis and the occupation?—Because we have to, we have to live and yes, you can call it *sumud*. (Marwan int. 2009)

This is not to claim that for Palestinians the Israeli occupation and military attacks have become a mere joke. To the contrary: the fact that many now deal with the unbearable situation through irony and humorous distancing highlights their quest for a normal life despite the abnormality around them.

Contemporary Palestinian cultural production also often adopts a more cynical or absurdist stance toward the occupation and Palestinian resistance.[17] For example, Palestinian novelist Liana Badr, in her short story "March of the Dinosaurs," describes the Israeli tank approaching as a dinosaur, and as "an enormous hen clucking, or like the Cyclops with its single eye, and the roar as it drew breath" (Badr 2009, 388). She tells of people's quest for normal life during the Israeli army attacks on the West Bank in 2002 and how people decided to stubbornly carry on with their life. The protagonist finds the following strategy: "I vowed not to accept the loss of my everyday life, and resolved to exercise daily so my body would not become feeble and weak. Exercises had to be the best way to obliterate the daily grind—like taking tranquilizers to cure the feeling of confinement" (ibid., 389). In addition to exercising, she relates how other joys of life can function as a way to resist oppression and depression caused by the occupation: "Previously, I had always succumbed to that fear which makes the Occupation so burdensome, rejecting any enjoyment of the music, as though simply listening to it during an incursion was a crime. But now [when she decides to change her habit and listen to music], I felt their cruel desire to impose themselves on our lives with their aggressive presence suddenly lighten to an astonishing

degree" (ibid., 390). Badr here not only confirms the shift in practices and discourses on everyday resistance from "suspension of everyday life" during the First Intifada (Jean-Klein 2001, 84) to "affirmation of life" (Junka 2006, 426)—in the protagonist's case the decision to resume listening to music—but she also specifically stresses the positive, even emancipatory effect that such stubborn insistence to carry on and enjoy normal life despite the occupation can have on the ideational or psychological level.

This is the form of *ṣumūd* that Palestinian women from various backgrounds repeatedly stressed to me: their everyday struggles to maintain a normal and—to the extent possible—enjoyable life for themselves, their children and families, despite the bleak and violent situation they live in. Lama, originally from Askar Camp in Nablus and whose voice has appeared throughout this book, explained her *ṣumūd* in the following way to me:

> When we were students in school . . . my best female friends and I used to talk a lot about our vision for the future, for our children. How much you need to keep yourself together, so that you will stay strong, despite all the sadness around you. How much you need to remain steadfast (*ṣāmida*). (Lama int. 2008)

Today women organize weddings and other celebrations for their sons and daughters, despite economic hardship; they take their families to visit relatives and friends in other parts of the West Bank; and they gather women through mainly informal networks to go on trips and picnics in the countryside, despite checkpoints and closures that restrict their mobility. The facts that particularly women now overwhelmingly are engaged in finding ways to pursue normal joyful lives, and that they identify and frame these struggles as a form of everyday resistance and *ṣumūd*, are crucial. Why at this moment in time, when things have only gone from bad to worse in Palestine, do women, in particular, put emphasis on keeping up hope, normalcy, and a joyful life? If we read women's *ṣumūd* as a diagnostic of shifting power constellations (Abu-Lughod 1990b), what can that tell us about developments in the nature of Israeli settler colonialism and occupation, as well as the related shifts in the matrix of various internal and external power structures?

In this section I continue the previous discussion of Israeli spatial control, its relation to strengthening internal Palestinian patriarchal structures, and its shaping of women's different and shifting forms of political agency. But now I pay particular attention to the *effects* that Israeli settler-colonial

policies aim to have on Palestinians—not only politically and spatially, but also socially and culturally. My focus lies on tracing how women respond to and counter these intended effects through their ideational and cultural forms of *ṣumūd*. I rely in particular on the cases of three women, Najla, Amal, and Karima, with all of whom I spent prolonged periods of time during my fieldwork and whose voices are already familiar to readers. For all three, space and mobility was a crucial issue, and they often presented and framed their pursuit of everyday pleasure through traveling (i.e., through regaining control of space) as an act of *ṣumūd* to me.

NAJLA

Najla works as a trainer for women's groups in Ramallah. Every Thursday after work, at around 4 p.m., she embarks on an unpredictable journey in a shared taxi from Ramallah back to her home village near Bethlehem. Since Palestinians with a West Bank ID like her cannot travel the direct way from Ramallah to Bethlehem through Jerusalem (which would take around an hour), she takes the often makeshift roads that wind through the craggy valley Wadi an-Nar, "the valley of fire." Depending on traffic and checkpoints, the ride home from work can take up to four hours. The ride back to work on Sunday morning might also take that long.

When not traveling back home, Najla uses the weekends to visit friends elsewhere in the West Bank. There is hardly a weekend that she stays in Ramallah, because, as she explained to me,

> I need to see my friends and enjoy life. I refuse to be locked up here in Ramallah and just spend my life working. I go, even if there are checkpoints and it takes long. I need to have a change of scenery (*taghyīr al-jaww*) from time to time. (Najla int. 2007)

Her expression *taghyīr al-jaww* (a change of scenery, *lit*. a change of air/climate) is very common—it captures well the feeling of being stuck in one place, always breathing the same air, with nothing new, enjoyable, or exciting happening. Even a short trip within the West Bank, such as Najla's from Ramallah to Bethlehem, constitutes for Palestinians a struggle to regain control over land, life, and living space.

AMAL

Amal is a mother of four—two boys and two girls. She used to live with her husband and children in their family home in one of the East Jerusalem neighborhoods that was sealed off from the city when the wall was

constructed. In order not to lose their Jerusalem IDs, she and her family had to leave their family home and move to a rented flat in Beit Hanina, an area of East Jerusalem on the other, Jerusalem, side of the wall. Amal used to be an active member of the communist party, but now she is no longer interested in political activism:

> I stopped. There is absolutely no point these days. Now I prefer to work as an individual, as Amal. I can, for example, go and treat sick people or help in any other way as an individual—but not in a collective, not in a political party. (Amal int. 2007)

Amal likes to enjoy life. With her female friends she organizes regular meetings and trips to different parts of the West Bank, a great deal of which is spent eating, telling stories of the past, and laughing about husbands (who are not allowed to join). "When I really want to relax, however," Amal told me one day, "then I take my book and go to the settlement nearby." I was surprised to hear that—of all places—she chooses an Israeli settlement to relax. Although Amal was not referring to the highly secured settlements in the West Bank (which are impossible for Palestinians to access), but to those inside Jerusalem, I still could not imagine how and why she, as a Palestinian, found it relaxing there. I wondered if it would not even be dangerous. She explained to me that she would wear sunglasses and a shirt with short sleeves, so that no one can recognize her as Palestinian.

> They think I am a Jewish woman. I can sit there and read my book and no one bothers me. They have nice gardens and parks there. Where can I go here [in East Jerusalem]? We have nothing here, and even if I would find a bench somewhere, people would look strangely at me. (Amal int. 2007)

It is true that Israeli occupation, control, and settlement in the eastern part of the city have drastically reduced Palestinians' spaces. The few public spaces that are still accessible to Palestinians are cramped and abandoned. It would indeed be strange, as Amal remarks, to try and relax on a bench in the crowded, dusty, heavily patrolled and noisy streets of East Jerusalem. Her move to reoccupy the public places in East Jerusalem's illegal Israeli settlements thus is perfectly understandable. Although the occupation has damaged and restricted Amal's life, she has decided to make the best of what there is, even if this means sneaking into spaces officially out of her reach. She is not alone in devising such tactics.

KARIMA

Karima, a forceful and restless Christian woman in her sixties, has long been a peace activist. After a joint Palestinian-Israeli women's meeting in Haifa, she told me that

> I see myself as the ambassador of peace and justice. I need to meet Israelis face-to-face to tell them about our suffering and what they do to us, so that they cannot escape their responsibility and guilt. (Karima int. 2008)

As the Palestinian coordinator, she had managed to secure travel permits for about twenty Palestinian women to go to Haifa for this workshop. When I joined the meeting (mentioned also in my introduction), there was tension between the Palestinian women and the Israeli program instructor, Rachel. Most Palestinian women complained that the topic of the workshop—communication skills and self-empowerment—is irrelevant to their situation, and that they felt patronized by Rachel, who did not allow any discussion about everyday life under occupation. Rachel, however, criticized the Palestinian women for not taking the course seriously and for "just coming here to have fun."

She was right. The Palestinian women did indeed come to Haifa to have fun. Hala, a university graduate whom Karima had brought to the meeting from Bethlehem, told me during one of the coffee breaks:

> I came to this meeting because I wanted to see Haifa and I wanted to take a break from my life in Bethlehem. Yes, you can write this in your research. I only came here to have fun. I have no problem saying that. But then—what sort of fun is that? It is not fun for me to come here and listen to her [Rachel's] bullshit. It is much better for me if I speak to my Palestinian friends who understand the situation and who understand my feelings. There is no point in telling her anything about my life or about me. (Hala int. 2008)

When I met Karima a couple of weeks later in her house in Bethlehem she immediately wanted to explain to me what had happened in Haifa. She directed her response directly to Rachel (who, of course, was not present with us in the room):

> Yes, we came here to enjoy! It is our right as Palestinians to also come here to Haifa to have fun. You stole our land [Karima's family is origi-

> nally from Haifa], our water, our rights and our freedom. So the least we can do is to come here to our land, go to the beach and have fun. There is nothing wrong with that. Or do you really think I want to come here so that you can teach me how to communicate? (Karima int. 2008)

Karima thus added yet another layer to how women see their travels as part of enjoying life. She states that it is her *right* as Palestinian to use and enjoy those spaces now inside Israel.

These three glimpses into Palestinian women's everyday lives illustrate their daily *ṣumūd* struggles to enjoy life specifically by going on trips. Crossing Israeli-imposed mobility restrictions in order to get a "change of scenery," *taghyīr al-jaww,* is, I argue, a political practice aimed at gaining not only physical, but also mental spaces. Women state that it is their *right* to have fun and relax in life, and they strive to keep up a sense of normalcy and hope, despite the destruction, death, and frustration they are caught in. Najla, Amal, and Karima attempt to carry on with everyday life by using and enjoying to the extent possible their fragmented and occupied living space. Their examples provide important insights into women's practical and discursive negotiating with changing and intersecting systems of domination in Occupied Palestine.

RESISTING THE ISRAELI COLONIZATION OF THE MIND

Clearly, all three women, with their trips, are attempting to gain control over their fragmented and occupied living spaces. Najla's defiance "not to be locked up in Ramallah" but instead to travel this land and use it proactively by embarking on unpredictable trips through the West Bank, despite checkpoints and closures, just as the case of Ilham trying to access her farmland, exemplifies what Hammami (2004) describes as the Palestinian resistance of "getting there." To reappropriate space for their own gains, Amal and Karima go a step further in their defiance of Israeli spatial control. For them, the air they want to breathe is not confined to "what is left" to them after the Oslo "peace" process. Their tactic to use those spaces now formally out of their reach and control, however, must—in order to succeed—take a more covert and cunning form than Najla's or Ilham's straightforward insistence to "get there." Both adopt a tactic of disguise: Amal quite literally by dressing up in a short-sleeved shirt and sunglasses (so as not to be recognized as Palestinian), and Karima by formally enrolling herself and friends in the colonizer's project (to obtain the travel permit).

Going to an Israeli settlement to relax, or to Haifa to the beach, or across the West Bank to visit friends and family clearly are not acts with which women can, or believe they can, permanently change or end Israeli settler-colonial control. It is, if we apply Certeau's (1984) analysis, a tactic to trick and temporarily subvert the established power configurations in a covert and invisible way. Gains are temporary, small-scale, and personal victories only: just as Ilham accessing her annexed farmlands, Amal, Karima, and Najla have no possibility of sustaining their gains and must negotiate access each time anew. Yet, in misleading and tricking the colonizer, they find joy and maintain their dignity. Certeau writes: "in these combatants' stratagems, there is a certain art of placing one's blows, a pleasure in getting around the rules of a constraining space. We see the tactical and joyful dexterity of the mastery of a technique" (1984, 18). The cunning act of subversion, of laughing at the oppressor, however temporary and individual, brings joy. The temporary gain over Israeli spatial control thus constitutes a way to challenge the colonization not only of Palestinian physical spaces but also their ideational spaces.[18]

This struggle to liberate one's mind from Israeli control mechanisms has been described by Raja Shehadeh:

> I think a lot about the choice that samidin [the steadfast] feel cornered into making: exile or submissive capitulation to the occupation, on the one hand—or blind, consuming hate and avenging the wrongs done to them, on the other. But it is in this conception of choice that the trap lies. States of mind cannot be forced on you. This is where you are free, your own master—because your mind is the one thing that you can prevent your oppressor from having the power to touch, however strong and brutal he may be. (Shehadeh 1982, 38)

Writing in 1982, Shehadeh insists that there must be another way forward, beyond, and alternative to submission and exile. His focus on the need to keep an independent mind as a resistance against the occupation rings as a prelude to the First Intifada that started just half a decade later. It was, after all, those who neither capitulated nor emigrated who led the uprising from 1987 onward. Moreover, this also confirms one of Scott's arguments that hidden small-scale acts can be a base for popular resistance. "Infrapolitics," Scott wrote, "provides much of the cultural and structural underpinnings of the more visible political action" (2005, 66).

But the links between resistance at the ideational level, popular resistance actions, and political change are not straightforward, especially

if considered for the complex post-Oslo political dynamics in Palestine. Some scholars are much more pessimistic than Shehadeh or Scott. Mbembé, writing in 2003 at a time when the Second Intifada had cost many Palestinians' lives, for example, has argued that Israeli "late-modern colonial occupation" turns Palestinians into "living dead" (Mbembé 2003, 25, 27, 40) and reduces their spaces for agency to their mere control over their own bodies and death (i.e., martyrdom). With this analysis, Mbembé makes clear that he, unlike Shehadeh, neither sees nor recognizes the possibilities and potentials in maintaining alternative cultural spaces: in the Palestinian context of extreme violence and ongoing settler colonization of indigenous physical and mental spaces, there is simply nothing left for Palestinians to do or to think.

Mbembé also, contrary to Certeau and Scott, does not believe in the power of laughter or humor. In his earlier book, *On the Postcolony*, he argues that humor and ridicule have no potential to bring about change: "those who laugh, whether in the public arena or in the private domain, are not necessarily bringing about the collapse of power or even resisting it" (2001, 110). In his view, humor, laughing, and joy should not be considered resistance since they do not radically alter the oppressor's material base. But Palestinians do not believe that their everyday acts will "bring [. . .] about the collapse of power." They know that their quotidian acts are not even as confrontational (in disguise) on power as the "carnivalesque" described by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981). With their everyday infrapolitics, women do not aim to confront the occupation itself but rather want to resist and defy the intended *effects* that Israeli policies exercise on their and their community's bodies and minds.

To better understand these deeper workings and the intended effects of Israeli occupation policies, Hanafi's conceptualization of "spacio-cidal" policies is useful. Writing in 2009, he describes the systematic dispossession, occupation, and destruction of Palestinian living space by the Israeli authorities as "spacio-cidal." By "exercising the state of exception and deploying bio-politics to categorize Palestinians into different groups, with the aim of rendering them powerless," Israel, according to Hanafi (2009, 106), aims to secure not only complete domination over the land, but also over the smallest details and fine grains of Palestinian everyday life. Like Mbembé, Hanafi understands Israeli policies to be all-encompassing, but he finds, unlike him, that there *is* agency left for Palestinians: "violence is not the only form of resistance. To counter the Israeli "spacio-cidal" project, Palestinians

transgress the regime of exception by constructing their habitat without permit, even at the risk of demolition" (ibid., 119). Through informal and irregular politics, Palestinians find their ways around Israeli control, and resist capitulating and submitting themselves and their community to the depression, oppression, and paralysis that Israeli "spacio-cidal policies," the violence, death, and loss around them, could have easily caused. Instead, they maintain a sense of hope and normality, and sometimes even laughter and joy, particularly when they manage to trick the colonizer and get "around the rules of a constraining space" (Certeau 1984, 18).

Junka (2006, 422) argues in her study on the politics of Gaza Beach that "if what is at stake in Palestine today is the very possibility of life itself and the ability of Palestinians to exercise control over their colonized bodies and spaces of everyday life, then the affirmation not only of death but also of life and pleasure becomes a meaningful aspect of the Palestinian struggle." Her conclusion also holds true for Palestinian women relaxing and enjoying life in a Jerusalem settlement, on a Haifa beach, or with friends and family in the West Bank. Najla's, Amal's, and Karima's quotidian politics are not confrontational. They do not target, and are not intended to target, the physical realities of Israeli settler colonialism directly. Rather theirs is a struggle to indirectly and quietly reappropriate and redefine their colonized, fragmented, and dispossessed spaces. Creating a sense of normalcy and trying to also enjoy life to the extent possible is a way to subvert the effects that Israeli policies were intended to have on them: to render them powerless. Since regaining and controlling their physical space is impossible, Palestinian women stress the need to maintain their own alternative ideational spaces. By insisting—to quote Karima—on their "right as Palestinians to . . . have fun," that is, on their right to lead ordinary lives, including its pleasures, joys, and laughters, women maintain a sense of normalcy and agency, and, in doing so, resist the Israeli colonization of their minds.

RESISTING PATRIARCHAL CONTROL

Women's everyday struggles are also shaped by (and shaping) internal Palestinian power structures. The earlier cited example of "self-nationalisation" and "suspension of everyday life" (Jean-Klein 2001) during the First Intifada, in this regard, is telling. The call to "suspend life" as a sign of commitment to the resistance was not only self-initiated by ordinary people but also enforced by family, community, political party,

and national leaders. People pushed each other and also their children, as Lama's earlier quotation reminds us, to "participate in the Intifada so that our family is like this or that person's!" The example Jean-Klein (2001, 97–101) provides of weddings and other life cycle celebrations being called off also illustrates these dynamics of communal control: a bride whose wedding was called off might not have chosen to do so on her own, but rather was *expected* to sacrifice her celebration and suspend enjoyment for the greater national cause.

Along with solidarity and unity, the First Intifada thus also augmented social pressures to conform, in particular on women. The more unified resistance or normalization discourse, which was endorsed not only through the leadership, but at the community and family level as well as through daily life experiences of mourning, death, and loss, strengthened control over people's everyday activities in general, but especially so over women's daily routines. Indeed, the discontinuation of normal everyday life hit women hardest, as it was predominantly their informal social and political networks and spaces, such as morning coffee circles, wedding celebrations, evening strolls, family visits, and so on, that had to be discontinued, rather than more official, male-dominated public politics. Women's informal networks, an important source of their social, economic, and political power, were most curtailed, thus reinforcing patriarchal power and domination as exercised at family, community, or national level.

Controlling what counts as resistance and what is branded as normalization, and when or why people—particularly women—are allowed (or not) to have fun, pleasure, and entertainment thus is a political issue: it is a way for hegemonic political actors to consolidate their social and political power.[19] Political actors tend to single out women's fun, entertainment, and pleasures in their internal power plays, because women, their bodies, and conduct are established markers of communal boundaries separating "us" from "them" and "our women" from "their women." The way women dress, speak, and engage politically or socially, and even how they go about their everyday lives in public and private, thus quickly can turn into a centerpiece of political debate and rivalry.

Whether and to what extent political actors manage to control women's lives, however, depends on the specific context. Sometimes more fragmented or decentralized political scenes might allow women to carve out spaces for their agency that previously were restricted. While the political culture of resistance and *ṣumūd* during the First Intifada was relatively

unified, it is much more fragmented in today's post-Oslo Palestine. Resistance still remains the main meta-frame for Palestinian politics, but there exist a multitude of definitions and practices. The increased spatial and political fragmentation of the Palestinian community, in combination with the violent attacks that Israeli forces carry out against any form of collective unified resistance, has reduced not only collective acts but also collective understandings of resistance. Palestinian political culture is increasingly characterized by a plurality of contradictory and competing narratives and forms of resistance: what counts as resistance for some is seen as normalization by others. The Second Intifada, for example, was of course launched in resistance to the Israeli occupation, but the form it took of public, action-oriented, and predominantly armed resistance was also a way to oppose and delegitimize the liberal dialogue and negotiations paradigm symbolized by the Oslo "peace" process.

Internal fragmentation of the Palestinian political struggle has certainly changed Palestinian political cultures, and the matrix of power relations that enable and constrain women's agency. Palestinian women now frame and practice resistance increasingly on the ideational (rather than action-oriented, practical) level, individually (rather than on a collective or national level), and affirming and relating to the here and now (rather than to an uncertain future). Amal sees "absolutely no point" in participating in collective organized political initiatives, Karima insists on her "right as Palestinian to come to Haifa to have fun," and Lama stresses that as a mother she has to resist Israeli occupation by "keeping herself together." By focusing on the self, the here and now, claiming their right to enjoy life and movement, and—importantly—framing their acts as a maternal responsibility and a form of political resistance against the occupation, women thus stay true to the socially endorsed meta-frame of resistance against the occupation. But their acts, even if not framed as such, also interact with and tackle another level of control—the social.

As discussed earlier, patriarchal power, unquestionably, has tightened as a result of Israeli occupation and settler-colonial policies. Yet, it might be argued that women have nevertheless increasingly found their ways through this tightened net of external and internal control. They have seized the moment of fragmentation, confusion, and contestation over what counts (or not) as resistance and normalization, and the general trend in Palestinian political culture toward a resistance paradigm that calls for the affirmation of life, to quietly, and sometimes unnoticed, challenge patriarchal restrictions, increase their mobility, and revive their informal

networks by continuing their everyday activities such as morning coffee circles, visits, celebrations, or leisure trips. Women frame and present these everyday acts as *ṣumūd*, as a strategy to resist Israeli control over their minds. But their insistence on their *right* to joy and a normal life also allows them—even if in a much more hidden and unrecognized way—to indirectly challenge and trespass patriarchal political control and surveillance of their mobility, fun, and social conduct.

This should in no way be understood as a celebratory argument praising the political and social fragmentation in post-Oslo Palestine for "liberating" women. The situation is much more complex: while most Palestinians have shifted their understandings and practices of resistance from suspension to affirmation of life, the precise forms that women's practices of affirmation of life can take vary greatly. Women are not free to choose; their agency is limited by different and contradictory resistance discourses that vary according to class, age, political party affiliation, and the spatial categories of town-camp-village as well as other local specificities. While, for example, the urban middle classes in Ramallah (but also Bethlehem or Jerusalem) might consider the pursuit of a normal joyful life a form of resistance (see Taraki 2008), the authoritative resistance discourse in places such as Nablus, Qalqilya, and Tulkarm (particularly, but not always in refugee camps) tends to take inspiration from the First Intifada paradigm of suspension of life. Najla's traveling within the West Bank might be broadly accepted among Palestinians as a form of *ṣumūd* of "getting there," but Amal's and Karima's acts of using Israeli space for their own gains without directly challenging the power relations between colonizer and colonized might not be accepted. In particular, not everyone might agree with Karima and consider women's participation in joint Palestinian-Israeli projects an act of resistance or *ṣumūd*. Probably most Palestinians, as discussed in chapter 1, would rather brand such participation a form of normalization (*taṭbīʿ*). The extent to which Palestinian women succeed in gaining social and political power by framing their crossing of patriarchal physical and normative boundaries as an act of resistance against Israeli "spacio-cidal" policies (Hanafi 2009) thus crucially depends on their individual context.

Conclusion

Palestinian women devise a wide variety of material and ideational strategies that aim at resisting and "getting by" (Allen 2008, 453) the occupation. I argue that their everyday survival and resistance acts of striving

for a normal life under the abnormal situation of the occupation should be considered political acts. Maintaining the everyday family economy and social fabric of community is a political act and a choice, just as it is a choice to engage in other forms of armed or unarmed resistance. The ordinary is not normal under occupation and, consequently, studying why people choose and how they manage to maintain an ordinary, normal life with joy and even fun can provide insights on how politics is done in contexts of prolonged conflict and occupation. At a time when direct overt political actions seems to bear no fruit and official politics seems far removed, the belief and insistence on dignity and normality as a right is a meaningful form of political agency.

Adopting such a broad definition of the political does not, however, mean that anything and everything is political. Rather, I understand women's acts of striving to maintain or re-create a normal life as a form of politics and resistance, because these acts directly target settler-colonial policies that seek to rid women of exactly that: their everyday normality, dignity, and ability to lead a regular joyful life. But this form of everyday political agency is less straightforward than conventional modes of political expressions, and it certainly is outside liberal frames, such as the Habermasian, which confine the public sphere and politics to acts of rational deliberation. Everyday politics is full of ambiguity: women with their quotidian survival and resistance acts might simultaneously challenge and accommodate different forms of domination. They publicly justify them as targeting some power structures (the occupation), while in fact also covertly making inroads into other forms of—for example, patriarchal or nationalist—control. They should thus not be hastily romanticized as necessarily being fully transformative in intent or outcome, but rather be studied as a diagnostic of shifting, interrelated, external and internal power constellations. Studied in that way, as a "diagnostic of power" (Abu-Lughod 1990b, 42), the infrapolitics of Palestinian women's *ṣumūd* highlight two main issues related to Israeli spatial (or "spaciocidal" in Hanafi's [2009] words) control and to the trend in Palestinian political culture toward an "affirmation of life" (Junka 2006, 426).

Palestinian women today are predominantly struggling to gain control over land, to "get there" (Hammami 2004). Israeli settler-colonial policies not only dispossess and fragment Palestinian living spaces but also target the fine grain and mere possibility of an ordinary joyful life. As this chapter shows, women's crossings of Israeli-imposed physical borders are everyday *tactics* only, with which women temporarily and

individually subvert, but never significantly or lastingly transform, the material power relations of Israeli settler colonialism. On an ideational level, however, their trespassing is a way to resist the intended effects of Israeli "spacio-cidal" (Hanafi 2009) policies. By defying Israeli-imposed mobility restriction and struggling to pursue—to the extent possible—a normal life, women do not surrender to those Israeli policies but rather fight to create and maintain their own alternative cultural spaces.

Women's struggles also reveal major changes in internal Palestinian power constellations. Patriarchal control, particularly over women's mobility, has been strengthened as a result of tightened Israeli control, more instability, heightened insecurity, and increased Palestinian fears of Israeli acts of gendered violence. At the same time, the Palestinian political landscape has become very fragmented, and most ordinary people are disillusioned with high-level official politics. Although resistance still is the main frame for political action, multiple (and often opposed and contested) understandings and practices of resistance have proliferated. Women have seized this moment of confusion over what constitutes "proper" resistance to formulate and live—albeit in different ways and degrees—their own more individual forms of resistance. By insisting that it is their right to lead a normal joyful life, women frame their acts of trespassing as political resistance against the Israeli occupation and thus stay true to the meta-frame of resistance, and more specifically the newer interpretations of *ṣumūd* as "affirmation of life" (Junka 2006, 426). Yet the apparently unintended side-effect of their defiance of Israeli policies is their "quiet encroachment" (Bayat 1997, 2010) onto internal political and social forms of male domination. With their acts of everyday resistance, Palestinian women thus not only challenge the Israeli occupation, but also bargain, practically and discursively, with entrenched "old" and "new" material and ideational patriarchal power structures in their own society.

Again, such ambiguous quotidian political acts do not constitute a long-term strategy for social and political change, but they stem from, reflect, and try to deal with the messiness of everyday life under occupation. This complex context, characterized as it is by a web of intersecting forms of oppression at different levels, cannot be neatly pressed into established analytical categories and binaries, and it also cannot be grasped by the rational choice model inherent in Scott's analytical framework or Habermas's liberal conception of the public sphere. Habermas sees a clear divide between the public sphere (where speech and discourse

need to have a rational character) and the private sphere, where "parasitic [not rational] language" dominates (see Gardiner 2004, 35). In this understanding, political actors need to be rational and their political intentions need to be clearly articulated, and be recognized, understood, and deliberated by and with others as such, since only through such rational deliberation can valuable norms be constructed. Everyday speech acts, in this analysis, do not comply with the characteristics of rationality, and everyday practices are considered even less suitable to be counted as part of the political.

Such a liberal approach based on the rational actor and prioritizing rational deliberation over everyday practices of politics bears the danger of slipping into a false consciousness argument judging certain acts as rational, conscious, and purposeful, while discrediting others as irrational, illogical, and without purpose. As such, it obfuscates a deeper understanding of Palestinian women's politics. In order to understand women's ambiguous infrapolitics of *ṣumūd*, a more nuanced and multilevel approach that starts from women's own practices, narratives, and framings is needed. Such a phenomenology of politics as lived, practiced, and narrated by Palestinian women themselves can, I contend, shed light on the complex functionings and meanings of the two notions—intentionality and recognition—so often debated in theories on everyday resistance.

As seen here, the reasons that women do their everyday politics in the way they do are multiple; their intentions shift over time and might not be easily recognizable to the observer analyst. Most importantly, everyday political acts often retain some ambiguity even for the women who enact and practice them. Women's *ṣumūd* might be perceived differently by different constituencies, and one single act might be targeting and influencing multiple levels of oppression simultaneously, some of which might be consciously challenged, while others might undergo transformations without the explicit intention of the actor. With their economic survival acts, for example, women do not intend to challenge, let alone end, the material manifestations of Israeli settler colonialism. Nor do they aim to directly target patriarchal structures in their own society. But their *ṣumūd* acts, although mostly individual and concerned chiefly with economic coping practices and, as such, without expressed political intent, can nevertheless evolve into more conscious collective and interventionist political and social activism (Peteet 1991), and they can also have significant influences on social and political dynamics.

Of course, the question of recognition remains. Many—including Najla, in her quotation that opens this book—would argue that in order to sustain

women's advances gained mainly through expanding economic practices, the larger community, and women themselves, need to recognize women's *ṣumūd* as politically and socially significant. The widening of women's social, political, and economic practices thus needs to be accompanied by a change in gendered discourse that recognizes these acts. Yet, given the often hidden and covert nature of female *ṣumūd* practices, combined with the more conventional, but widespread, societal understanding of these acts as extensions of women's traditional roles in the household, female everyday coping and survival acts are rarely given the recognition they deserve. Recognition (and thus visibility or invisibility), particularly of women's largely covert and quiet acts of resistance, thus is a complex issue. Women's acts of resistance, given their oppositional and often irregular informal character, must be hidden from the Israeli authorities, but also sometimes from Palestinian, male-dominated sources that control women's social conduct. Instead of making recognition itself a criterion for everyday resistance, one should thus rather trace *whether*, to *whom*, and *how* actors make their small-scale acts either visible and recognized or invisible and unrecognized (see also Einwohner and Hollaender 2004, 541). In their narratives, women often articulate their *ṣumūd* practices only partially, or they frame them differently to different audiences depending on the context—all with the implicit aim of preempting being challenged, undermined, and blocked.

If women indeed do speak about and make public their everyday resistance, they need to carefully choose which of the multiple levels targeted by their acts they prioritize in their public framings. MacLeod's (1992) insights on the new veiling practices adopted by educated working Egyptian women in the 1980s in this regard are telling: "For women, there is no clear-cut other to confront directly. Facing a layered and overlapping round of oppressors, women do not have the relative luxury of knowing their enemy. . . . An ambiguous symbolic solution like the veil that speaks on different political levels suits the nature of these overlapping power constraints" (MacLeod 1992, 552). Like Egyptian women, Palestinian women face a "layered and overlapping round of oppressors" (ibid., 553). But, unlike them, they have the "luxury" of knowing their enemy. While maintaining a certain ambiguity in their acts, Palestinian women tend to foreground this clear-cut other—the Israeli settler-colonial regime—(rather than patriarchal power structures) in their *ṣumūd* narratives. Representations and framings, as further elaborated in the conclusion, thus are important criteria for the analysis of women's everyday politics.

Conclusion

Reclaiming Humanity and the Politics of Women's Everyday Life in Occupied Palestine

Palestinian women engage in many different forms of politics, and have done so historically. Studying their political activism necessitates a focus not only how women *do* politics, but also what their acts *mean* to them and others, as well as how they frame and present or represent them. In Palestine, women have a wide variety of political agencies, ranging from everyday survival and coping strategies, through different forms of popular resistance (covert and overt, individual and collective, nonviolent and more confrontational) to more conventional liberal peace negotiations and dialogue projects. Women give very different, even oppositional, meanings and framings to these politics.

An analysis of women's political activism, particularly in the Palestinian context of prolonged Israeli occupation and ongoing settler colonialism, thus requires a broad conceptualization of "the political." It necessitates moving beyond mainstream representations of Palestinian women (and women in conflict more generally) as only victims, peacemakers, or armed resisters. It also requires looking beyond classic liberal notions of the public sphere and forms of political engagement, narrowly defined as negotiations, peace projects, voting, or participation in political parties or labor unions. One needs to pay attention especially to the informal level, and trace how women do politics in their everyday spaces, often in hidden and silent ways. These subaltern everyday politics are neither

radically confrontational (as popular resistance) nor liberally dialogical (as peace projects). They are necessarily embedded within the wider matrix of intersecting economic, social, political, and cultural power structures, while also struggling against them.

Studying women's politics from below thus requires attending to both the macro-level context in which women are operating as well as the micro-level of their practices, meanings, and representations of their political agency. In this conclusion I summarize and further develop my findings in four areas: context, practice, meaning, and representation of female political agency in Palestine. I also expand on the theoretical thread that runs throughout the book, namely the question of what a phenomenology of women's politics in Palestine can contribute to theorizations of the political.

Context: Tracing Intersections

At the macro-level, Palestinian women's activism is shaped by the politics of Israeli settler colonialism, of the PA, and of patriarchal control within Palestinian society, and also by various global feminist agendas, in particular the mainstream liberal WPS agenda with its UNSCR 1325.

Israeli settler-colonial policies of annexation, fragmentation, and separation have systematically occupied and destroyed Palestinian living spaces. Such spatial control policies are, of course, first and foremost concerned with the annexation and occupation of land, that is, with physical, material spaces. But over the last decades and given the false promise of peace- and state building of the Oslo Accords, Israeli policies have also increasingly targeted Palestinian ideational spaces: they aim at the fine grain of everyday life, intending to destroy any alternative cultural spaces, any sources of hope and normality, that might be left to Palestinians in this long-term abnormal situation of occupation, violence, and injustice. These more intrusive and indirect forms of Israeli settler-colonial policies and governmentality aim to block collective political mobilization, seeking to render Palestinians powerless and without agency.

The PA has largely failed to counter these policies and has lapsed in its responsibility to provide leadership as a national authority. Often acting as the de facto enforcer of Israeli security policies on the ground, it has even actively curbed collective mobilization against the occupation. PA forces have clamped down on Palestinian demonstrators, as well as more generally on alternative political organizations and sources of power,

including those of the women's movement. The Oslo Accords and its institutional outcome, the PA, have not lessened the devastating impact of the occupation but augmented it, and they have heightened factionalism among different Palestinian political groups.

As a result, social conservatism has increased in Palestinian society. Different Palestinian political actors regularly try to delegitimize their rivals by branding them and "their women" (i.e., their gender agenda) as Westernized, as following uncritically the liberal state- and peacebuilding agenda, and/or as normalizing, and a threat to so-called authentic Palestinian culture and traditions. Israeli occupation policies have also strengthened internal patriarchal structures. Prolonged political violence and military assaults have raised the very real threat of gender-based violence against Palestinian women and girls by Israeli soldiers and have, moreover, strengthened conservative gender norms in Palestinian political culture that juxtapose militarized masculinities to a femininity model of women as victims in need of protection. In this context of permanent direct and structural violence, kin-based patriarchy has been revived and women's mobility and conduct is more tightly controlled.

These intersections highlight that everyday politics take place in complex and multifaceted realities where the private and the public, as well as the economic, the political, the social, and the cultural intermingle to form connected webs of oppression. Women are maneuvering through this matrix of control—and so their political agencies necessarily also encompass economic, cultural, and social aspects (see also Singerman 1995). The personal is political; political and economic dynamics affect the so-called private sphere and in fact are part and parcel of it. The everyday is not removed from questions of power and money; rather it is here, at the daily level, that women—probably even more so than men—struggle for economic, social, cultural, and political empowerment. The everyday is not outside but rather forms a core part of the political. One promising way to examine how women do politics in this context is to analyze practices, meanings, and representations or framings of their activism.

Practices: Informality and Irregularity

Intrusive and omnipresent Israeli control, and Palestinian factionalism and lack of leadership (which is largely the result of Israeli policies), combined with rising social conservatism, have strangled any genuine

participation in conventional politics. Women, in particular, have shifted to informal ways of doing politics, be they irregular and ad hoc such as popular resistance, or covert and seemingly mundane, such as women's daily *ṣumūd* acts.

Amid this disillusionment with formal politics (particularly with the liberal negotiations and dialogue paradigm), the mainstream liberal WPS agenda (and its UNSCR 1325) entered the Palestinian political landscape in 2000. The WPS agenda, and the liberal women-to-women peace projects to which it gives rise in Palestine, are overwhelmingly rejected by Palestinians. The imagery of a pacifist Palestinian woman who dialogues with an Israeli woman on the basis of their alleged peaceful (maternal or feminine) nature or their joint gender interests does not provide a mobilizing model for Palestinian women. The political practices of dialogue, reconciliation, and conflict resolution are viewed by the great majority of Palestinians today as a luxury that only the powerful can afford. For the occupied and powerless, resistance (*muqāwama*), not dialogue projects (*barāmij al-ḥiwār*) nor conflict resolution (*ḥal aṣ-ṣiraᶜ*), constitutes the most broadly accepted frame for political action.

Consequently, as the book shows, most women engage in different forms of resistance activism and enact a proactive gender model of "female political resistance activist." With its call for just peace, the popular resistance agenda finds stronger local support than the liberal WPS approach. Yet, popular, largely nonviolent, resistance in Palestine also is not isolated from broader global agendas. Local activists respond to and interact with bi- and transnational solidarity movements (including specific feminist initiatives), as well as with the more recent mainstream international call (by, for example, the EU) for principled nonviolence (*lā ᶜunf*) projects, which often target especially women. Such principled nonviolence initiatives, and the related glorification of women as symbols of nonviolence, are, similarly to the dialogue-for-peace programs, received with skepticism by local constituencies who tend to reject them as attempts to co-opt the local popular resistance movement into less radical and more conventional liberal politics.

Even this more confrontational popular resistance activism (*muqāwama shaᶜbīyya*) for which in theory broad social support exists, has, however, in practice failed to evolve into a more coherent, centrally organized collective civil resistance movement. Civil resistance in Palestine today, unlike during the First Intifada, lacks a unified leadership; it is ad hoc, localized, and fragmented. Women participate in protests, but largely in

a spontaneous and unplanned way. There have been few initiatives by local women leaders to organize female participation more systematically, but generally these attempts have been blocked by Israel's harsh reprisal measures, and some were also taken over by male-dominated local politics, factionalism, and rivalries. This highlights that when women go out to protest, they face potential opposition from a variety of actors, institutions, and sources. With their public popular resistance acts, they confront and trespass restrictions set not only by Israeli occupation policies, but also by internal patriarchal norms and forms of control.

It is true that a lack of central coordination might have weakened women's popular resistance. But in order to circumvent the multiplicity of authorities that watch over and have the potential to block their public political agency, it is also necessary for women to maintain a certain degree of decentralization and irregularity in their activism. The fact that women's popular resistance in Palestine today is irregular, spontaneous, and based largely on informal local women's, family, and community structures, rather than formal political networks and institutions such as the state, political parties, or NGOs, thus might also be intended by women as such. Women's political spaces must remain unofficial and irregular so as not to be repressed or undermined by Israeli occupation authorities, or by patriarchal forces in Palestinian society. In this specific context, women's organizing and participation in irregular, informal, decentralized, and ad hoc protests are not ineffective or irrational, but a political strategy that is purposefully and consciously enacted.

Most women, however, practice politics in ways even more informal and irregular than popular resistance. They engage in often invisible and covert, small-scale everyday resistance (*ṣumūd*) through material and ideational coping strategies at individual, household, and community levels. Women find ways to access their annexed lands, they sneak into Jerusalem to sell their products, or they open small income-generating cooperatives (*jamᶜīyyāt*) to support the family economy. In addition to such economic coping strategies, women play a vital role in maintaining the social fabric of their community, and they resist colonial subjectification through their striving to keep up a normal joyful life filled with hope and dignity for themselves, their children, family, and community.

Women's everyday resistance and survival struggles (*ṣumūd*), in contrast to formal liberal dialogue projects (*barāmij al-ḥiwār*) and radical confrontational protest action (*muqāwama shaᶜbīyya*), are mostly quiet and individual and thus remain largely outside the focus of both the Palestinian

and international community. Yet, as a subaltern politics from below aimed at countering Israeli spacio-cidal policies (Hanafi 2009), they constitute meaningful and significant political acts. The meanings of women's everyday politics, as well as more overt forms of women's political agency, however, are contradictory, multiple, and often strongly contested.

Meanings: "Empowerment" and "the Personal Is Political"

Women's political agencies in complex situations of prolonged conflict, violence, and settler-colonial control are ambiguous, and different political or analytical positions endow them with different meanings and potentials. For example, those supporting and promoting the mainstream liberal WPS agenda tend to consider women-to-women peace initiatives a win-win solution for both peace *and* gender empowerment. Naomi Chazan, a Knesset member and one of the Israeli women in the IWC, for example, argues that "women's participation in conflict resolution is integrally related to the empowerment of women" (Chazan 2004, 55). Liberal women peace activists, such as Chazan, thus try to justify joint Palestinian-Israeli women's projects by establishing a link between women's gender and peace activism.

Supporters of this agenda also often find support in and use the feminist slogan "the personal is political" to validate their position. In such interpretations, the "personal is political" is understood and read as supporting the focus in joint initiatives on the interpersonal level of reconciliation and bridging across the national divide. This, however, is a misinterpretation. "The personal is political" was coined by second-wave feminists who wanted to highlight that women's so-called personal problems, such as domestic violence or the lack of health care and child care, are in fact not personal but political issues because they result from broader systemic political injustices. They stressed this interconnection between the personal and the political to substantiate their structuralist argument that an individual struggle with such issues will have little impact. Instead, they called for collective political action to address those systemic injustices that trickle down to the very "personal" level (see, e.g., Hanisch 1970).

In the interpretation of mainstream women-to-women peace groups, the slogan "the personal is political" is turned upside down. It is changed from its original meaning—that women's so-called personal problems

are produced or at least implicated by broader systemic political structures—to denoting that all political circumstances are the result of personal choices and actions of individuals (see also Richter-Devroe 2009). In doing so, liberal approaches harbor and continue colonial feminist legacies: by tracing the roots of conflict at the so-called personal level and foregrounding social and gender relations, the liberal agenda recycles the colonial feminist claim to "save local women" (and in fact the whole world) from what are framed as barbaric, patriarchal cultures. Such a narrative establishes convenient, moralistic pretexts to legitimize international interventions. In Palestine, it serves to justify the WPS agenda's interventions on women's empowerment while cementing a distorted and depoliticized analysis of the conflict that marginalizes its political and historical root causes.

The mainstream international liberal WPS agenda thus in fact fails to make the connection between the personal and the political. It relies on a depoliticized feminist stance that firstly isolates gender and then prioritizes it over political oppression. It does so precisely because the actors who uphold it are not willing to tackle the political nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In the Palestinian-Israeli context, the Israeli side and the international community use the gender construction of peacewomen to promote and legitimize so-called peace projects that are, in fact, far removed from the realities of settler colonialism, military assaults, and occupation on the ground. Unsurprisingly, most Palestinians reject this liberal approach as a neocolonial feminist agenda. They perceive it as an attempt to discipline Palestinian women's activism into certain—tamed, decontextualized, and depoliticized—forms of engagement (dialogical peacebuilding in joint Palestinian-Israeli initiatives), while delegitimizing and undermining other, more radical political initiatives that pertain to the paradigm of resistance and that do in fact have the potential to empower women socially and politically.

For Palestinian women, joint peace initiatives thus are not a win-win solution: such initiatives neither brought them peace, nor did they empower them. In line with feminist theorizing and practice in the Global South, Palestinian women are well aware that their empowerment as women cannot be achieved through mere inclusion in peace or conflict-resolution processes, but rather is closely linked to their (and their entire society's) political and economic empowerment. Such a comprehensive conceptualization, rather than the narrow access-based liberal approach,

was, for example, proposed by the late Maha Nassar, who was head of the leftist PFLP-affiliated Union of Palestinian Women's Working Committees when I interviewed her in 2008:

> Our union [the UPWC] boycotted joint projects from the beginning. For us they are a waste of time and effort and we consider them to be the wrong way of involving women in political activism. Our aim is to empower women and to give them a stronger political role, but this does not mean involving them in the peace negotiations. Political activism means to change laws to be empowered, to share in the decision-making process, etc.—but it has nothing to do with joint projects with Israeli women, because we will never be on an equal footing. . . . It is very nasty to bring poor Palestinian women who need food and clothes for their children to meetings with privileged Israeli women just because both live in a male-dominated society. This is not a gender perspective. Our gender perspective in the union is closely related to both the class and national struggle. (Nassar int. 2008)

Although not all Palestinian women would necessarily follow Nassar's radical anticolonial Marxist feminist approach (which situates their struggle squarely within the national, anticolonial, and class struggle), everyone agrees that women's real empowerment goes beyond mere inclusion in peace initiatives. It has a material basis, and, as such, requires an end to Israeli occupation, including its strangulation of the Palestinian economy. Joint Palestinian-Israeli (or international) women's initiatives, if indeed they want to work toward Palestinian women's empowerment, thus have to acknowledge the political and relatedly economic, rather than solely social and patriarchal nature of Palestinian women's suffering and oppression.

Critiques against the liberal gender mainstreaming and empowerment agenda are voiced in particular by leftist activists and by women organized in the Islamic movement. In contrast, many of the national-secularist female political leaders, who have traditionally entertained strong political party affiliations to Fatah, DFLP, and FIDA, have, after the post-Oslo decline of Palestinian party and collective politics, become professionalized, and some of them have aligned themselves more strongly with the liberal peace agenda as promoted by the international community. Aside from splits along the lines of political party affiliation, class, residence, legal status, and socioeconomic status, generation has become a strong marker in the Palestinian women's movement. Young female activists are challenging the older generation's professionalized feminist politics and their grip on social and political power. They criticize

this generation for joining, or at least not clearly rejecting, the mainstream WPS agenda, which, in their eyes, forms an integral part of the conflict rather than providing a solution to it. They are quite right. The developments in Palestine since Oslo show that the mainstream liberal agenda has changed little on the ground. Moreover, it has contributed to exacerbating social and political fragmentation in the Palestinian community and in the women's movement in particular. The liberal WPS paradigm has hardly kept its promise of a win-win solution: it has not advanced peace, it has left female activists in limbo, and it has even contributed to weakening the women's movement in Palestine by professionalizing and fragmenting it.

Female popular protest actions, on the other hand, might in fact hold greater potential than the liberal peace paradigm to bring about sustained collective change. This is so because female popular resistance activists got it right with the feminist slogan "the personal is political": Their activism springs from their daily experiences of Israeli occupation policies invading their so-called personal lives. Their everyday lives are affected profoundly by the political context of occupation and settler-colonial expansionism. But rather than personalizing and pathologizing conflict in psychosocial bonding, these activists launch a head-on attack on political oppression and exploitation based on their own experience of living under occupation. In their radical antagonistic resistance activism, they target the occupation openly, highlighting injustice and discrimination as inherent characteristics of the settler-colonial regime. In doing so, they provide and enact political models alternative to and different from mainstream liberal politics, both the liberal dialogue-for-peace model and conventional ways of doing politics, such as voting or political party affiliation.

Women's popular resistance also contests nationalist male-dominated social and political cultures in Palestine. Female resistance activists challenge gendered hierarchies in Palestinian political culture by performing and enacting a femininity model of women as heroines who defend their land and people. With their acts, women unsettle binary nationalist ideologies that reduce women to wombs and elevate men to citizens-warriors. Their acts, even if indirect and remaining theoretical in the Palestinian quasi-state, constitute a radical democratic practice through which women make claims for equal rights as citizens. The full realization of this non-masculinist, non-militarist, yet proactive form of political culture, of course, remains difficult given the omnipresent control that the Israeli occupation (along with the PA) exercises over women's and

other community-based and civil-society-based grassroots politics. Yet, it does enact alternative female political subjectivities, and it projects new political imaginaries ahead. Popular resistance thus is potentially more empowering than the liberal peace agenda for women, as concerns both their social and their political struggles.

The transformative potential of women's everyday struggles is even more difficult to assess. Women's subaltern politics exercise ambiguous and varied impact on different structures of oppression. On the ideational level, they should be understood as resistance against Israeli "spaciocidal" policies (Hanafi 2009) that aim at subjectifying and rendering Palestinians powerless. Laleh Khalili (2014), analyzing the 2014 Israeli attack on Gaza, and drawing broader findings on the functionings of settler-colonial regimes, argues that "the lesson of the most recent Israeli assault on Gaza, as in all previous assaults, is that civilians are not 'collateral' or accidental casualties of war between combatants, but the very object of a settler-colonial counterinsurgency. The ultimate desire of such asymmetric warfare is to transform the intransigent population into a malleable mass, a docile subject, and a yielding terrain of domination. Such a population will not have an independent national economy, will not have spokespersons or artists or writers or students or football players, will not have a politics." Palestinians, however, resist becoming docile colonial subjects; they *do* have a politics.[1] Women's everyday acts are political, because they endure in settler-colonial policies of pervasive, omnipresent, and harsh control aimed at reducing Palestinians to passive victims, devoid of any political agency. Women's bypassing of the physical and structural violence of the occupation must be understood as a reappropriation of their occupied spaces, and thus a form of resistance, however subtle, against Israeli colonial measures. By preserving their own alternative cultural spaces, and maintaining their dignity, humanity, and a sense of normal joyful life, women resist the colonization of their minds. These small-scale politics from below might not result in immediate transformations at the macro level of political structures and systems, but they might, with time, add up, forge stronger links with, and even impact on broader political, social, or economic dynamics (see also Bayat 1997, 2010; Singerman 1995). For example, women's infrapolitics of work (*ʿamal*), such as their trips to Jerusalem to sell vegetables or their recurrent attempts to access their farm lands, are often initially economically motivated. But then they can and do evolve into more collective protest action, and might even contribute toward outlining and enacting alternative political and social projects.

The fact that there are links between individual small-scale survival and coping practices and broader social and political dynamics highlights once more the need to do away with false boundaries between the political, the social, and the economic. In a context where a settler-colonial regime works to attack and destroy Palestinian social, economic, and political spaces at all levels, women's agencies aimed at resisting these subjugating measures within any of these (overlapping) fields are necessarily political. While acknowledging these intersections, it remains important to remember that Palestinian women's real empowerment is blocked by Israeli settler-colonial and occupation policies. The international community's provision of gendered development and peacebuilding projects risk deflecting attention from this political reality. They can thus only function as a supplement, not as an alternative to genuine political work in the Palestine.

Representations: Hybridity and Ambiguity

Women in post-Oslo Palestine strategically merge three main gender models when framing their activism: women as pacifists-peacemakers, women as resisters-protestors, and women as survivors-strugglers. Each of these gender models has its own genealogy.[2] Here I have chosen to focus on and trace their usages in post-Oslo Palestinian political cultures. My interest has been less in whether such gender identity discourses qualitatively or quantitatively reflect reality, and more in how political and social actors instrumentalize them in processes of othering that are aimed at weakening opponents and their agendas.

The first, the peacewomen discourse, is deployed only by few activists in Palestine today. Sometimes it is upheld by urban-based, globalized NGO leaders, particularly in their dealings with international or Israeli counterparts. The younger generation—especially women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the Islamic movement, camps, or villages, and those with anti-Oslo political party affiliations—criticize these professionalized women leaders for working with the mainstream liberal WPS agenda and for relying on its peacewomen discourse. While this critique is true to an extent, women leaders do not simply adopt and internalize international Western agendas. Rather, they try to adapt them to their own context. Palestinian women leaders who participated in the International Women's Commission, for example, tried hard to reform the liberal peace agenda from within and to establish their own rights-based interpretation of the UNSCR1325.

Those opposing the mainstream liberal peace agenda propagate an image of themselves as politically active female resisters-protestors. The courageous female heroine was historically associated with the *fidā'īyya*, the female freedom fighter, and, during the First Intifada, became established and internationally known through women's extensive participation in popular resistance. Today, the imagery of women as resisters-protestors remains popular. It tends to be associated in particular with refugees, who are often reified as symbols of Palestinian resistance, but it is increasingly also claimed and enacted by women in the Islamic movement as well as by rural women, given their prominent role in the anti-wall demonstrations in West Bank villages.

The fact that such a radical gender model, which has the potential to challenge male-dominated political cultures, is enacted today predominantly by refugee and rural women as well as female supporters of the Islamic movement calls into question stereotypical representations (often adopted in urban modernist narratives) of rural, refugee, or religious women as socially conservative, backward, or isolated. In reality, these constituencies of Palestinian society propose and engage in radical politics and, in doing so, challenge the social and political status quo. The radical gender imagery of women as resisters and protestors is often reified as the authentic and pure Palestinian gender model vis-à-vis the foreign-imposed neocolonial peacewomen imagery. But it is important to remember that it also interacts with broader global discourses and agendas. Female popular resistance activists increasingly relate to broader transnational agendas and are well connected; refugee camp and village residents in particular have in the last decade or so established stronger links to international justice and solidarity movements.

The third gender construction often used by women to frame their political activism is that of the steadfast struggler-survivor (*aṣ-ṣāmida*). Originally associated with the steadfast peasant woman, this imagery (often branded as static and traditionalist) took on a more proactive meaning related to resistance steadfastness during the First Intifada. Today, the Islamic women's movement has endowed this more proactive gender imagery of *aṣ-ṣāmida* with religious connotations, often making references to Islamic female figures such as Aisha and Khadijeh, but most Palestinian women, from various backgrounds, use it without attaching religious meanings to it. Sometimes they might relate it to international humanitarian discourses. By framing their everyday coping struggles in terms of suffering, but also steadfastness against injustice and violence,

women use humanitarian language strategically to make their voices and political demands heard internationally (see also Feldman 2007). To live, to struggle, and to survive in the abnormal context of prolonged occupation, settler colonialism, and violence, they assert, is to resist.

What unites all three gender models is their stress on the inescapably political nature of subjectivity and self-identification in Palestine. In a context of statelessness, prolonged occupation, war, and military violence, if Palestinian women want to receive support from their own society for their actions, they must emphasize their service to the political cause. Women prioritize their political and national identities over their gender identities because of social expectation, and also because they themselves identify first of all as Palestinians. Moreover, they generally stress resistance and justice over—what by now is understood as superficial, empty—peace. There are, of course, also local representations that link women to peace, nurturing, and nonviolent forms of struggle. But, at their heart lies women's political struggle to achieve self-determination and end Israeli settler colonialism injustice, and discrimination.

When talking about their everyday acts, women also foreground their political nature, even if these quotidian political practices might not appear to serve political or national aims at first sight. Women generally present their everyday struggles for mobility and a joyful normal life as *ṣumūd* within the post-2000 everyday resistance paradigm of "affirmation of life" (Junka 2006, 426). They thus frame them as a way to resist Israeli control over their cultural and ideational spaces. But their acts also simultaneously, even if in a much less pronounced way, covertly circumvent and silently challenge internal patriarchal control over women's mobility and what is considered legitimate female behavior. Of course, women are aware of the ambiguity of their acts; to gain legitimation, they place them under the broadly accepted meta-frame of resistance against Israeli settler colonialism, rather than against patriarchal sources of control.

When analyzing women's often complex and ambiguous ways of doing politics, it is thus important to take into account both the level of political practice (how women *do* politics) and that of representation (i.e., how they represent their politics). Since women, their bodies, and their behaviors are critical to communal boundary marking and to delegitimizing opponents and their political projects, women need to pay particular attention to how they frame and represent their acts. Often these representations determine whether women can or cannot continue and succeed with their struggles.

Just as women's political practices and related meanings are multiple, the framings which female activists attach to their politics—although prioritizing resistance as a meta-frame—also are not singular. They are a hybrid of different discursive frames from local, national, and global discursive repertoires. Many activists themselves might rhetorically juxtapose the peacewoman imagery as Western-imposed and inauthentic with what is cast as the pure or authentic steadfast struggler-survivor or the female popular resistance activist. But most of the time, in their search for local, domestic, and international support, activists frame their politics with a mix of gender constructions, selectively borrowing from traditional and modern, secular and religious, liberal and radical discursive frames: the traditional, yet courageous peasant woman who participates in transnational justice movements against the wall, or the modest yet modern Islamic resistance activist who merges religious with secular rights language. Women strategically employ so-called traditional gender models, such as that of the mother, to open up spaces for female political and social activism; they use supposedly apolitical humanitarian language, such as that on suffering and victimhood, to be heard by an international audience and make political claims; and they merge religious codes with secular rights discourse to engage in radical dissent politics.

Women's politics in Palestine thus might appear as somewhat out of focus with a multitude of even contradictory meanings and framings. This ambiguity, and the related hybridity of female political subjectivity, however, is necessary. Women struggle against multiple intersecting forms of oppression simultaneously and have to align and justify their activism within a web of fragmented and competing political cultures; their acts have to be out of focus, mainly from Israeli settler-colonial, but also from Palestinian patriarchal, surveillance and control. Women's everyday resistance and survival practices have to be largely hidden and unrecognized, their meanings must be multiple and ambiguous, and their representations need to be hybrid, in order to evade repression and remain sustainable.

The Politics of Everyday Life in Occupied Palestine

My analysis of practices, meanings, and discourses of Palestinian women's different forms of political activism carries several theoretical and conceptual implications. Relying on Fraser's (1985, 1992, 1995) and

other scholars' post-liberal critiques, I have shown that the ways in which women do politics in Palestine does not fit neatly into the liberal model. The multiple and varied political practices that Palestinian women engage in challenge in particular four points of the Habermasian liberal public sphere (1984, 1987, 1989), a model used throughout this book as an example of broader liberal approaches to, and conceptualizations of, "the political."

First, as analyzed in chapter 1, the failure of the joint Palestinian-Israeli women's peace initiatives demonstrates that the Habermasian "ideal speech" situation—especially his claim that rational discursive deliberation forms, and should form, the core of politics—is unworkable in Palestine. In such an asymmetric context between colonizer and colonized, dialogue means reinforcing existing power hierarchies and the status quo. The possibility of dialogue and deliberation to create common ethics and consensus (which should lead to eradicating inequality and injustice) in a context where the systemworld (*Systemwelt*) of material and political dispossession dominates peoples' lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) can only be achieved if material changes are affected first. Politics by settler-colonial powers, however, are based on, aimed at, and benefit from material asymmetries; they function and are maintained through imposition, control, and discrimination. Consensus established in such contexts must be viewed skeptically, as it will always be tainted by, and risk reproducing, subordination and domination (Fraser 1992, 131). Meaningful ways for the colonized and the powerless to do politics is not through accessing and dialoguing within given—starkly unequal—power structures, but by disagreeing with, resisting, and confronting injustices, discrimination, and inequality with the aim of bringing about concrete material rather than attitudinal changes. The Palestinian political culture of resistance, which has incorporated and is based on this understanding, thus offers a profound critique of Western liberal political philosophy.

Second, the fact that Palestinian women are subjected to a multitude of gendered forms of political, social, economic, and cultural restrictions that mitigate their access to the public sphere in different shifting ways contradicts Habermas's (1989) liberal understanding of a singular uniform public sphere, in which rational-critical debate can take place freely (see Fraser 1992, 1995). Israeli settler-colonial policies have fragmented, weakened, and strongly stratified the Palestinian political landscape. They have, in particular, strengthened public patriarchy, limiting

women's autonomous organizing and decision making in the sphere of official politics. Women's access to conventional politics is restricted by Israeli occupation policies, and also by different forms of male domination expressed materially and discursively in their own society. In this context of intersecting forms of colonial and patriarchal control, women have had to find other unconventional forms of political engagement, such as protest activism, mother politics, or *ṣumūd* in which they include so-called private issues, and through which they enact alternative political subjectivities and create subaltern counterpublics (Fraser 1992, 1995). These counterpublics, in contrast to liberal conceptualization of the public sphere, target and aim to eradicate inequalities between colonizer and colonized, but also between men and women, or between peasant, refugee, and urban constituencies. Rather than bracketing and silencing discrimination and inequality—be they at political (colonizer-colonized), social (gender), or economic (class) level—they seek to remove and eliminate them.

Third, women's ways of doing politics in Palestine challenges Habermasian, and more generally liberal, political theories' reliance on rigid categorizations and binaries. Liberal political analysis tends to uphold classic binaries between the public and the private, the *Systemwelt* and the *Lebenswelt*, the rational and the irrational, the material and the ideational, the market and the state, and so on. My analysis of women's everyday resistance and survival mechanisms revealed, however, that such binary demarcations not only fail to grasp the much more complicated, multifaceted and intersecting realities on the ground, but they also fortify and normalize hegemonic, largely male-dominated forms of power. Keeping up boundaries between the public and the private effectively relegates women to the realm of the private, and thus outside of what is delineated as the political. In a similar way, categorizing deliberation and ideal speech as rational, while casting everyday language in the private sphere as irrational, disempowers women and marginalizes their spaces as unsuitable for political engagements. Rather than dismissing the everyday, the private, or the lifeworld as outside the political, we need to try to see what possibilities the everyday offers to understand people's actual lived experiences of doing, enacting, and embodying politics.

This leads to a fourth point on which women's politics, in particular their radical protest actions, reveal another limitation of Habermas's liberal conception of the political. By claiming that political actors (should) engage in politics through rational discursive deliberation, Habermas, and

liberal political theory more broadly, neglects the major role that the body and embodied political practices can and do play in politics. His position promotes "an ideal of impartial reason operating in an abstract space disconnected from experiential, embodied and affective human qualities" (Gardiner 2004, 43; see also Alway 1999) and, as such, remains idealist and far removed from actual political practices. The Habermasian liberal ideal of the public sphere operates on "a *de facto* mind/body dualism" (Gardiner 2004, 31) and reifies rational discursive deliberation (the mind) as higher and more sophisticated than bodily political expressions and practices.

Habermas's political actors are "communicatively competent, but disembodied subject[s]" (Alway 1999, 138; cited in Gardiner 2004, 33); they say and speak, rather than enact and do politics. Yet, as we know from the Foucauldian analysis of power, the body is not only the site where power manifests itself and might be internalized, it is also the site where domination is resisted, challenged, and opposed. Women's bodies thus are political battlefields. On them, political opponents unleash their rivalries, and through them—through their bodies—women enact and realize alternative political and gender models that go far beyond and against the Habermasian liberal model. Political analysis must pay attention to this and move from a focus on language and speech to that of embodied political practice. This is not a call for abandoning the analytical level of discourse and representation (i.e., how politics is represented). Rather it should function as a reminder that politics, particularly in more complex and quickly changing situations such as the Palestinian, is predominantly simply done: it is through practice, rather than through speech and dialogue (which, in any case, in such an asymmetric context is far from ideal), that politics takes shape on the ground. The analysis presented in this book thus calls for a broadening of what constitutes the political, and, in particular, a better understanding and integration of everyday practices into conceptions of the public sphere and politics. It calls for a phenomenology of lived experiences and embodied practices of the political: how women do—rather than discourse or deliberate—politics on a daily basis.

This focus on embodied everyday political practice, rather than discourse, offers another valuable insight: For most Palestinians today, striving to simply live a normal life and affirm this life—their right to life—in the abnormal situation of the occupation constitutes probably the most meaningful way to engage politically. Palestinian everyday life

is dominated by material dispossession, political violence, insecurity, fragmentation, and unpredictability. In this context, many have come to see little point in theorizing or strategizing a unified national model for Palestinian liberation, whether in speech or on paper. Instead they simply get on with and do politics, largely at the local level and predominantly concerned with achieving immediate rather than long-term effects. After more than sixty-five years of struggle, abandoned by the international community and without effective or credible political leadership, they view both top-down agendas, the liberal proposal of gaining access to existing, but strongly unequal structures, but also the more radical call to break with, resist, and transform unjust systems, as largely futile ways of political engagement. It is not that Palestinians have become politically paralyzed, but instead of following these conventional binary channels of politics aimed at either accessing or breaking existing structures, their agency is aimed at simply getting by, around, and through the system with the least possible harm and noise.

The normal, the everyday, is never stable and predictable in Palestine. Since their lives are dominated by uncertainty, subjected to multiple sources of power and influence, and no defined structures to claim their rights, Palestinians seize any opportunity to ease their suffering. As a stateless people they lack, however, not only a representative authority but, more importantly, have no valid means, bodies, or institutions through which to fight for their sovereignty, legitimacy, and rights. "The calamity of the rightless," as Hannah Arendt famously remarks in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, "is not that they are deprived of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, or of equality before the law and freedom of opinion—formulas which were designed to solve problems within given communities—but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever. Their plight is not that they are not equal before the law, but that no law exists for them" (Arendt 1973, 295–96). As the stateless, Palestinians are not just deprived of their fundamental social, political, and civic rights, but, as Arendt (1973, 296) terms it, the "right to have rights": of "a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective." She concludes that "Man, it turns out, can lose all so-called Rights of Man without losing his essential quality as man, his human dignity. Only the loss of a polity itself expels him from humanity" (Arendt 1973, 297).

Arendt's writings forcefully engage with and critique the international nation-state-based system for causing refugeehood and statelessness,

while, at the same time, ignoring and not offering any solutions to that mass phenomenon. Her main argument, as Judith Butler summarizes succinctly, functions as a reminder that "to have the nation-state is to have statelessness" (Butler in Butler and Spivak 2010, 54). Arendt's work points out the plight of those left outside of the international system based on nation-states, the stateless, but it does not elaborate much on the forms of political agency that are left for those expelled from humanity.[3] Her critique at the system-level, nevertheless, offers important insights into understanding how the stateless, those without the right to rights, do and understand politics.

Palestinian women's insistence on their *right* to have a joyful normal life constitutes, as I hope this book shows, a way for them to fight the existing system, the status quo, by reclaiming their humanity. Their acts of maintaining normalcy and dignity are a political strategy of resisting to be expelled from humanity and thus from having the right, or a place in the world, to have rights. It is a form of resistance—a refusal to accept political dispossession, and a constant mental and physical struggle resisting colonial subjectification. Women's politics of everyday life in Palestine are, and must be recognized as, a way of reclaiming humanity, making political claims, and asserting political subjecthood.

Palestinian women's subaltern politics is contained in and enacted through everyday life. Living in (and against) a context of ongoing settler colonialism requires political creativity. It necessarily is an ambiguous form of politics that does not fit easily into established categories and binaries. Women resist, challenge, and circumvent multiple, shifting, and intersecting layers of material and discursive power structures with their creative and hybrid forms of political agency. The forms, modes, spaces, and framings of their "politics from below" often are decidedly different—less conventional, less heroic looking, quieter, and less defined—than the forms of women's politics that we expect and know from established nation-states. Rather than discoursing and strategizing, women in Palestine do, embody, and enact whatever form of politics is possible in this destructive and debilitating context of prolonged occupation, statelessness, military violence, and settler-colonial expansionism. This unconventional form of political engagement, despite its inherent paradoxes and ambiguities, remains for most Palestinian women today the most meaningful, most sustainable, and often simply the most urgent thing to do. There is much to learn from how women do politics in Palestine.

Appendix

Groups, Networks, and Organizations

Conflict Resolution and Nonviolent Resistance Organizations

Al-Mubadara, Ramallah
Alternative Information Center (AIC), Bethlehem
Arab Educational Institute (AEI), Bethlehem
Beit Sahour Raprochement Center, Bethlehem
Circle of Health International, joint project between Palestinian and Israeli midwives, Jerusalem and Ramallah
Combatants for Peace, Tulkarm
Crossing Borders, Ramallah
Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (GPAAWC), Ramallah
Holy Land Trust (HLT), Bethlehem
International Solidarity Movement (ISM), Ramallah
International Women's Peace Service (IWPS), Salfit
Israeli Committee against House Demolitions, Jerusalem
Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), Jerusalem
Just Vision, Jerusalem
Library on Wheels for Nonviolence and Peace, Hebron
Local Popular Committees in three West Bank governorates

Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy, Jerusalem
Musalaha, Bethlehem
Palestine Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation, Bethlehem
Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center (Wi'am), Bethlehem
Palestinian Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME), Bethlehem
Parents Circle—Families Forum (PCFF), Jerusalem
Willy Brandt Center, joint project between young Palestinian and Israeli political leaders, Jerusalem

Women's Organizations

Arab Women's Union, Bethlehem
Coalition of Women for a Just Peace, Jerusalem
General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW), PLO-affiliated, Ramallah
International Women's Commission, (IWC), Ramallah
Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW), Jerusalem
Machsom Watch, Jerusalem
Ministry of Women Affairs, Ramallah
Palestinian Federation of Women's Action, FIDA-affiliated, Ramallah
Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees, DFLP-affiliated, Nablus
Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD), People's Party–affiliated, Ramallah
Shashat, Women's filmmaker organization, Ramallah
TAM, Women Media and Development, Bethlehem
UNESCO Palestinian Women Research and Documentation Centre, Ramallah
Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC), PFLP-affiliated, Ramallah
Women's Affairs Center, Gaza
Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC), Ramallah
Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, Ramallah
Women's cooperative, Beit Jala
Women's cooperative, Durra, Hebron
Women's cooperative, Salfit
Women' cooperative, Tulkarm
Women's Prisoner Organization, Tulkarm
Women's Studies Centre (WSC), Jerusalem

Academic Organizations and Think Tanks

Al-Haqq, Ramallah
Al-Quds University, Insan Center, Jerusalem
Birzeit University, Institute of Women' Studies, Birzeit
Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, Jerusalem
Right to Education Campaign, Nablus

Note: The organizations listed here do not present a comprehensive list of conflict resolution, nonviolent resistance, women's, and academic organizations in Palestine. They refer only to those groups that I visited and whose members I interviewed, that is, those organizations that form part of the research on which this book is based.

Notes

Introduction: From Revolutionary Activism to Informal Politics

1. All interviewees' names have been changed to pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity. If interviewees explicitly requested their names to be revealed I provide their first and family names.

2. An interesting and rich academic literature addresses women's activism in the First Intifada and the early years after the Oslo Accords. These works trace the crucial social, economic, and political role that women played in the Intifada's committees (Darraj 2004; Jad 1990; Jean-Klein 2003; Hiltermann 1993); the ways in which women's social gender and political national struggle are interlinked (Antonius 1979; E. Kuttab 1993; Abdo 1994; Galvanis-Grantham 1996; Jad 1995), the complex maneuverings that women mastered in both their everyday and more public activism to circumvent opposition and control from different political, both secular and religious, forces (Hammami 1990; Jean-Klein 2001), as well as the dilemmas they were confronted with, and the disillusion they felt, once the Intifada had ended and the Oslo "peace" and state-building process set in, marginalizing their demands (Abdo 1994; Abdo and Lentin 2002; Jad, Johnson, and Giacaman 2000; Barron 2002). For probably the most comprehensive overview of Palestinian women's activism during the Intifada and the early years after Oslo, see Sabbagh (1998) and Jad (2004b). For an interesting argument on how women's activism in the Intifada has influenced their feminist struggles, see Hasso (2001, 2005). There

is, moreover, a very important literature on Palestinian refugee women's activism, particularly in Lebanon (see Peteet 1991; R. Sayigh 1987, 1992, 2007a, 2007b).

3. See also Andoni (2001) for an insightful comparison between the First and the Second Intifada.

4. For more recent studies that trace this intersection between the personal and the political in Palestine, see Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009) on East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and Muhanna and Qleibo (2009) and Muhanna (2013) on Gaza.

5. See Kelly (2008), Meari (2014), Richter-Devroe (2011), and Teefelen (2007) on everyday resistance and *ṣumūd* in post-Oslo Palestine. See Allen (2008) for a focus on the notion of "getting by" the occupation, and Hammami (2004) on "getting around" it.

6. Scholarship on the Middle East has been dominated by a macro-level approach to politics, neglecting to pay attention to subaltern politics in the region. See Cronin (2007) and Bayat (1997, 2010), whose works already proposed and called for a focus on the politics from below in the Middle East before the Arab uprisings.

7. See R. Sayigh (1992), Swedenburg (2003), Darraj (2004), Jad (1990, 2004b), King (2007), and Fleischmann (2003) for a detailed account on the early period of women's activism in Palestine.

8. The following works, among others, trace the role of nonelite actors in Palestinian history: Swedenburg (2003) analyzes the role of Palestinian peasants in the Great Revolt; Fleischmann (2003) provides a detailed analysis of the Palestinian women's movement during the British Mandate period; R. Sayigh (1987, 1992, 2007a, 2007b) has written extensively on Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon, largely based on women's own oral history narratives; Khalili and Humphries (2007) trace women's Nakba narratives; Davis (2011) writes on the Palestinian refugees' village books; and Jad (1990, 2004b) has studied different aspects of the Palestinian women's movement in different historical periods.

9. For a comprehensive and in-depth study of the Palestinian national movement and its political and ideological development, see Y. Sayigh (1997).

10. The *fidā'īyya* and *ṣāmida* are images regularly employed in Palestinian cultural production. The iconographic depictions of the *fidā'īyya* (e.g., Leila Khaled) tend to stress similarities to her male companion; the *fidā'ī*. *Aṣ-ṣāmida*, on the other hand, is usually presented as decidedly different to the male fighter and often stands for the mother of the *fidā'ī* or martyr (*shahīd*). Ghassan Kanafani's *Um Saʿd* depicts the stereotypical steadfast mother (*aṣ-ṣāmida*) of the *fidā'ī*. She is praised by her husband—in line with popular nationalist discourse—with the following words: "this woman gives birth to children who then become *fidā'īyūn*; she provides the children for Palestine!" (Kanafani 1973/2006, 29; my translation).

11. On International Women's Day, 8 March 1978, politically active women, mainly from the leftist factions (DFLP, PFLP, Communist Party, and independent women activists) founded the Union of Palestinian Women's Working Committees (UPWWC). The UPWWC later branched into four committees. Although each of

these was established as the women's wing of the four major political parties within the PLO, they united around a joint agenda (Jad 1990), which differed from that of the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) with its focus on *niḍāl*, as well as from the older charitable organizations (e.g., the Society of Inash Al Usra) with their focus on *ṣumūd*. The UPWWC united women on the basis of a shared political platform and, to a certain extent, also incorporated social and women's issues, rather than philanthropic-charitable or purely nationalist-liberationist considerations. Through their more decentralized and flexible organizational structures, female activists in the committees were able to overcome the exclusivity of both the charitable organizations and the GUPW.

12. The status of women and their activities were mentioned in several UNLU leaflets (see Mishal and Aharoni 1994), but no radical changes to women's status were proposed. The leaflets predominantly stressed women's role in education and rendering services (see also Jad 1990). In Palestinian cultural output during or related to the Intifada (e.g., folk legends, literature, paintings, and songs), similar images were reinforced, and in particular, mothers' reproductive capacities were praised and politicized as a national duty. One of Suleiman Mansour's famous paintings, for example, portrays a pregnant woman giving birth to masses of Palestinians, and in Fadwa Tuqan's poem "Hamza," the land gives birth to warriors. For a discussion on the mother figure in Palestinian national discourse and cultural productions see, among others, Al-Botmeh and Richter-Devroe (2010), Bardenstein (1997), Kanaana (1998), and Mabuchi (2003).

13. See Roy (1999) for a detailed study on the negative impact of the Oslo process on the Palestinian economy and Rabbani (2001) or Said (2000), among others, for a critical in-depth study of the Oslo Accords, its reception by Palestinian society, its functioning, and its inherent contradictions.

14. Various studies trace the institutionalization of public patriarchy by the PA after the Oslo Accords. Among them are Abdo (1999), Amal (2001), Sh'hada (1999), and Jad (2004b).

15. I use the term *liberal* not in its classic sense of denoting a system organized around the principles of free market, civil liberties, and equal rights. Rather, by "liberal" peacebuilding I refer in this book to the mainstream, mainly Western-originated, gender, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding agendas, that—as is discussed in detail throughout the book—tend to emphasize *access to* rather than *transformation of* existing (discriminatory) systems as a pathway to social and political change. On the notion of liberal peace and liberal peacebuilding, see also Goodhand and Walton (2009), Mac Ginty (2008), Mac Ginty and Richmond (2007), Richmond (2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010), Richmond and Franks (2011), Richmond and Mitchell (2011), and Turner (2006).

16. For literature on popular resistance in Palestine, see, for example, Allen (2002), Darweish and Rigby (2015), Dudouet (2008, 2009), Norman (2010), Norman and Carter Hallward (2011), Ghandour-Demiri (2012), Mason and Falk (2016), Pearlman (2014), Seitz (2003), Qumsiyeh (2011), and Zelter (2009).

17. See critical discussions in Fultner (2001), Jabri (2006), Jones (2000), and Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse (2006) on the applicability of Habermas's theory to conflict transformation approaches, as well as the broader debate on liberal peace and conflict resolution. J. Kuttab and Kaufman (1988), Naser-Najjab (2004), Said (1996), Waage (2006), and chapter 1 of this book offer critical analyses of the (dialogical) liberal peacebuilding model in the context of Palestine and Israel.

18. For a theoretical elaboration of this argument, see Fetherston (2000) and Goodhand and Walton (2009). For a discussion of the argument in the Palestinian-Israeli context, see Sharoni (1997) and Chomsky and Pappé (2014).

19. I borrow from Glenn Robinson, who uses the term "peace of the powerful" (2001b) as well as the formulation "hegemonic peace" (2001a) to describe the "peace" process between the two very unequal sides, Palestine and Israel.

20. For an elaboration of this argument see Naser-Najjab (2004), J. Kuttab and Kaufman (1988), and Said (1996).

21. Feminist scholars, particularly those adopting poststructuralist intersectional approaches, acknowledge that women's political priorities, subjectivities, and forms of political agency depend on and emerge from their individual positioning within this web of intersecting structures. See, for example, the works by Cockburn (1989, 2004, 2007, 2012), Enloe (1989, 2000), Jabri (1996), Seifert (2004), Tickner (1992), Shepherd (2008), and Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009) for intersectional analyses of women and war. Some of these feminist works on gender, peace, and conflict resonate with Galtung's (1996) structuralist conceptualization of "positive peace," which demands the removal of all (including gendered) structural, cultural, and physical forms of violence as preconditions for lasting peace.

22. Works by Abu-Lughod (1986/2000, 1989, 1990a, 1993/2008), Said (1978, 1989, 1993), Scheper-Hughes (1992, 1995), Sharoni (2006), Spivak (1988), Swedenburg (1989), and Narayan (1993) have been particularly helpful for me when thinking through my own positionality and responsibility as a researcher working in and on Palestine.

23. Since then I have traveled to the West Bank regularly for several research visits in the framework of a joint research project on Palestinian refugees (with Dr. Ruba Salih, SOAS) and to the Naqab for a project on Naqab Bedouin women. Since these two more recent research projects do not explicitly focus on West Bank women's politics, I did not count them as the core fieldwork for this book, but of course these regular fieldtrips to Palestine since 2009 also inform my writings here.

24. The majority of my interviewees were from the First Intifada generation (ca. 60%), while the younger (Oslo) and older (Nakba) generation each comprised about 20 percent. Most interviewees were from the urban centers mentioned above (ca. 60%), but I also spoke to women from villages and refugee camps (each ca. 20%). Most of my respondents were Muslim (ca. 70%), but not all were practicing their religion.

25. See the appendix for an overview of the women's groups and organizations consulted for this research.

26. I conducted interviews in Arabic and English (or a mix of the two), depending on the interviewee's English language skills. All translations are mine. The majority of the more official interviews lasted between one and three hours and could either take a more classic interview/respondent style or flow more naturally in the form of a guided conversation. The informal and often spontaneous interviews were more familiar, and varied in length: they could be one-hour interviews (and then mostly focused on the interviewee's experience in a specific event or situation) or take the form of extended conversations over several days (covering a wider range of topics). Twenty-six interviews and three focus groups were recorded; in the rest I preferred to take notes, either during or after the interviews.

27. With my research focusing on Palestinian women's activism, the great majority of my research participants were, of course, Palestinian women, but I also interviewed some Palestinian men, as well as a few Israeli and international activists involved in joint peacebuilding or nonviolent resistance activism.

28. We were talking then about the first boat of international solidarity activists that went to break the Israeli siege on Gaza in 2008. Since then, the Free Gaza Movement (see www.freegaza.org) has sailed several times to Gaza. They have been violently stopped by the Israeli authorities four times, including the attack on the Freedom Flotilla on 31 May 2010, when nine activists were killed and many more injured.

Chapter 1. Women's Peacebuilding: UNSCR 1325 and the Post-Oslo Peace Supermarket

The core argument of this chapter has been presented in a much shorter article on E-IR (www.e-ir.info/), Richter-Devroe (2012b). Parts of the chapter also draw on Richter-Devroe (2008, 2009) and Pratt and Richter-Devroe (2011).

1. See Hammami (1995) and Hanafi and Tabar (2005) for a critical analysis of the NGOization and professionalization of post-Oslo politics in Palestine, and Jad (2004a), who researches the NGOization of the Arab women's movement. For a detailed discussion on donor-recipient relations in Palestine see, in particular, Hanafi and Tabar (2005, 86–251).

2. Many have praised the resolution for establishing and affirming the crucial link between social (gender) change and political (conflict) transformation in—traditionally gender-blind—mainstream policy circles. The literature on UNSCR 1325 (and subsequent related resolutions) has grown immensely since 2000. See, among others, Anderlini (2007), Cohn (2004), Cohn, Kinsella, and Gibbings (2004), Cockburn (2007), F. Hill (2002), F. Hill, Aboitiz, and Poehlman-Doumbouya (2003), and Whitworth (2004) for discussions that, although also critical, tend to consider the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000 a positive development in the mainstream UN and international WPS agenda.

3. The Palestinian organizations that have worked with UNSCR 1325 include, for example, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (www.mowa.gov.ps), the Jerusalem Center for Women (www.j-c-w.org), the Palestinian Conflict Resolution Centre Wi'am (www.alaslah.org), MIFTAH (www.miftah.org), and the International Women's Commission (IWC, now defunct).

4. See, for example, Al-Ali and Pratt (2009a, 2009b) and Al-Ali (2005) for a discussion of 1325 in the context of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Abu-Lughod (2002), although not focused specifically on UNSCR 1325, studies the gendered rhetoric of "saving Muslim women" that accompanied the invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

5. My argument here runs counter to that of Katz (2009), who maintains that early initiatives between Palestinian and Israeli women were able to overcome the national divide on the bases of women's shared gender identity, rather than a shared political agenda.

6. For a detailed discussion of the development of the Israeli women's peace movement, see Pope (1993), Katz (2009), and Emmett (2003).

7. A "human chain" was formed by Israeli and Palestinian activists in 1989 around the Old City as a joint public peace protest.

8. The PDFLP was later renamed the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). In 1991 Abed Rabbo split from the DFLP and formed the Palestinian Democratic Union (FIDA). While FIDA supported the Madrid talks and civil society dialogue, Hawatmeh's faction of the DFLP opposed them. FIDA was considered by most Palestinians I spoke to among the strongest supporters of joint political dialogue.

9. See Ashrawi (1995, 60–61), Sharoni (1995, 143–44) and Jad (2004b, 193) for more on the 1989 Brussels conference.

10. The 1995 Oslo II Accord stipulates in its annex 6 a specific "Protocol Concerning Israeli Palestinian Cooperation Program," the People-to-People Program. The program's bottom-up approach, with its rationale of "dialogue-for-peace" and its focus on civil society actors, is most clearly mirrored in article 8. Here both sides are called on to "cooperate in enhancing dialogue and relations between their peoples" and to "take steps to foster public debate and involvement, to remove barriers to interaction, and to increase the people to people exchange and interaction" (Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement, 1995, annex 6, article 8).

11. For a detailed discussion of Norway's role in the "peace" process, see Waage (2006); for a detailed study of Fafo's role, see Endresen and Gilen (2000); for wider literature on post-Oslo joint Palestinian-Israeli peace projects, see, among others, Andoni (2003), Maoz (2000, 2004), Naser-Najjab (2004), Baskin and Al-Qaq (2002), Herzog and Hai (2005), the contributions in *Palestine-Israel Journal* 12, no. 4 (2005), and 13, no. 1 (2006), and Adwan and Bar-On (2000, 2004).

12. Conflict resolution scholars with a liberal perspective tend to support Boutrous Ghali's Agenda for Peace (United Nations Secretary General 1992) and

its call for bottom-up peacebuilding, finding that NGOs and non-state actors are often critical in expanding peace constituencies in local communities (see, e.g., Fitzduff 2002 and Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2006; and for analysis in Palestine/Israel see Adwan and Bar-On 2000, 2004; Baskin and Al-Qaq 2002; and Maoz 2000, 2004). More critical analyses, however, has shown that NGO involvement in peacebuilding (just as in development more broadly) often ignores the broader structural geopolitical context that sustains conflict (or underdevelopment) and, in doing so, risks depoliticizing and privatizing social and political movements on the ground (e.g., Duffield 1998; Carey and Richmond 2003; Goodhand 2006).

13. For a detailed discussion on donor-recipient relations in Palestine, see Hanafi and Tabar (2005, 86–251).

14. For detailed studies on the Jerusalem Link, see, among others, Daniele (2014), Devaney (2006), Farhat-Naser (2005), Golan (2004), Golan and Kamal (2005), Kumpulainen (2008), and Powers (2006).

15. Before 1998, the EU had supported Palestinian-Israeli peace projects through other existing budget lines.

16. Such essentialist "peacewomen" arguments have been upheld, in different forms, in a variety of feminist works. See, for example, Ruddick (1995), Gilligan (1982), Brock-Utne (1989), Reardon (1988, 1993), and Strange (1989).

17. See also Weingarten and Douvan (1985), d'Estrée and Babbitt (1998), Powers (2006), and Katz (2009) for studies that uphold the essentialist "peacewomen" argument for the specific context of Palestine/Israel.

18. For a more elaborate discussion on the interlinkages of different forms of violence at different levels, and a feminist antimilitarist stance, see, for example, Cockburn (1998, 2004, 2007, 2012), Enloe and Cockburn (2012), Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009), and Sharoni (1995, 1997). Importantly, a feminist antimilitarist stance should not be confused with the simplistic argument that causally links gender inequality with intra- or inter-state conflict (see, e.g., Caprioli 2000, 2005). Rather than identifying gender inequality as cause for conflict, a feminist antimilitarist stance traces the mutual interlinkages and co-constitution between various forms of violence and conflict at different (social, cultural, political, economic, etc.) levels.

19. I thank Islah Jad for drawing my attention to this PACBI toolkit.

20. Abdo (1994) and Jad (2004a) propose a similar argument. For a detailed discussion of feminist anti-national stances in women's anti-war movements see Abdo and Lentin (2002) and Cockburn (2007, 192–202).

21. For more detailed discussions on transversal politics in the Palestinian-Israeli context, see, for example, Cockburn (2007), Cockburn and Hunter (1999), and Yuval-Davis (1997, 1999a, 1999b).

22. See Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Abdo (2006) for an in-depth study on the difficult economic and political situation that Palestinian women face in East Jerusalem.

23. Chinkin and Charlesworth (2006) discuss the various objections raised in many developing countries against using international law as a framework for peacebuilding. For the Palestinian context, see Allain, Āsi, and Fares (2005), who analyze the applicability and relevance of international law; Hajjar (2001), who examines the various ways in which the human rights framework is used but also rejected by Palestinians; and Allen (2013, see also 2008), who analyzes the "rise and fall of human rights" in the Palestinian context. Feldman (2007) focuses on humanitarianism and counters the argument that humanitarianism necessarily depoliticizes the Palestinian national struggle by showing how Palestinians link their suffering to political claims. The complexities of using the international rights framework, in particular human rights, to further women's struggles are also exemplified in other contexts. See, for example, Patricia Richards's work (2004, 2005) on Chilean women's rights-based activism.

24. The fact that participation in peace initiatives based on UNSCR 1325 is largely limited to elite women in the Palestinian context was confirmed to me by various interviewees. See also Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009).

25. Habermas himself, in an interview to the *New Left Review*, admitted that his philosophies fail to capture dynamics of anti-imperialist and/or anticapitalist struggles, and, as such, remain limited and Eurocentric (quoted in Said 1993, 336).

Chapter 2. Women's Popular Resistance: Embodied Protest and Political Claim Making

1. Conflict transformation scholars who have studied nonviolent resistance include, for example, Lederach (1995), Sharp (1973, 1990, 2005), and Galtung (1989, 1996). Social movement researchers who research popular nonviolent resistance include McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996), Jasper (1997), Tilly (2004), and Melucci (1989).

2. The classic works by Bourdieu (1977), Certeau (1984), and Scott (1985, 1990, 1997) provide interesting in-depth analysis of small-scale resistance at the level of the everyday. See the subsequent chapter for a discussion on Palestinian women's everyday resistance and infrapolitics, and the relevant body of literature.

3. On conceptualizations of resistance, see, for example, Abu-Lughod (1990b), Brown (1996), Einwohner and Hollaender (2004), Ortner (1995), Rubin (1996), and Vinthagen (2015). Weissman (2008) and Clark (2009) link conflict resolution and social movement theory; Escobar (1992) identifies contributions that social movement theory could make to anthropological studies and vice versa; and Bayat (1997, 2010) brings together sociological and anthropological approaches on collective and everyday resistance.

4. On resistance as a catalyst for change, see, among others, Allen (2002), Darweish and Rigby (2015), Dudouet (2008, 2009), Norman (2010), Norman and Carter Hallward (2011), Ghandour-Demiri (2012), Mason and Falk (2016), Pearlman (2014), Seitz (2003), Qumsiyeh (2011), and Zelter (2009).

5. See, for example, the works by King (2007), Fleischmann (2003), Jad (1990, 2004b), Swedenburg (2003), R. Sayigh (1987, 1992, 2007a, 2007b), and Khalili and Humphries (2007) for more elaborate discussions on Palestinian women's activism in this early historical period.

6. Important in these discussions about popular resistance as a political strategy against the occupation is Mubarak Awad, who in his 1984 pamphlet proposes popular nonviolent resistance through methods such as civil disobedience, building alternative institutions to undermine the occupation, acts of support and solidarity among Palestinians, strikes, boycotts, harassment of and refusal to cooperate with soldiers, collaborators and Israeli authorities, and demonstration and protest actions as a comprehensive strategy to resist the occupation.

7. Several Palestinian, Israeli, and international scholars and practitioners have attempted to revive popular resistance as a unified strategy for Palestinian liberation, arguing that nonviolent popular resistance, if adapted and practiced proactively, on a mass base, and with strong leadership, still constitutes a promising agenda (e.g., Dudouet 2008, 2009; Halper 2006; Sarraj 2003; Zelter 2009).

8. Israeli settler-colonial policies of spatial control have variably been described by scholars as "enclavisation" (Falah 2005), "bantustanization" (Farsakh 2005), "creeping apartheid" (Yiftachel 2005), "spacio-cidal policies" (Hanafi 2009), and "matrix of control" (Halper 2000). See also the work by Weizman (2012), who analyzes the architecture of Israeli settler-colonial control, and Abu El-Haj (2002), who links Israeli archaeology to knowledge production and settler-colonial practices.

9. In March 2010, for example, the Israeli army declared Bil'in and Nahalin as closed military zones, barring Israelis and internationals from access (see, e.g., BBC 2010).

10. For a more detailed analysis of the PA's security sector and its cooperation with Israel, see, among others, Khalili (2010), Leech (2017), Tartir (2015), and Turner (2015)

11. For an analysis of the PA–civil society relationship, in particular how the PA curtails civil society in Palestine, see, among others, Parsons (2005, 178), Hammami and Tamari (2001), Jad (2004b), and Abdo (1999).

12. Most of the organizations have a Web presence, where information on their agendas and programs can be found. See www.sabeel.org (Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre), www.musalaha.org (Musalaha), www.aeicenter.org (Arab Educational Institute), www.holylandtrust.org (Holy Land Trust), www.alaslah.org (Palestinian Conflict Resolution Centre Wi'am), www.pcr.ps (Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People), www.ccrr-pal.org (Center for Conflict Resolution & Reconciliation), www.lownp.com (Library on Wheels for Nonviolence and Peace), www.mendonline.org (Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy), http://cfpeace.org/ (Combatants for Peace), and www.stopthewall.org/ (GPAAWC).

13. See the list of organizations that have been awarded grants in 2007, 2009, and 2010 (European Union 2010).

14. Similarly, a 2008 Gallup poll showed strong Palestinian support (62%) for nonviolence (see Saad 2008). For a discussion and analysis of Palestinian perceptions of nonviolence, see also Allen (2002), including the subsequent dialogue with Nassar, Tamari, and Allen (2003).

15. Allen (2002, 2003), Richter-Devroe (2009), and White (2007) discuss the nonviolence paradigm and its influence on local Palestinian discourses and practices of resistance. For a detailed discussion of the legal rights of an occupied people to resist, see the debate between Falk and Weston (1991, 1992) and Curtis (1991), as well as Falk (2002).

16. The village of Bil'in is probably the most well-known among the villages that stage regular anti-wall demonstrations. It has received a lot of media attention, and the documentary *Five Broken Cameras* (Davidi and Burnat 2012) has propelled it to international fame.

17. Most of my interviewees who were involved in nonviolent popular resistance were skeptical of the PA's support. This included individual local leaders and activists, as well as organizations. See also Audeh (2007) and White (2007) for a discussion of the PA's move to claim support and leadership of the anti-wall demonstrations.

18. See Costain (2000, 179), Beckwith (2002), and Cockburn (2007, 178–80) for such an argument.

19. Much of the analysis and documentation of the anti-wall demonstrations in the West Bank village of Budrus, for example, has emphasized the strong female participation. They often focused on the local leader's, Ayed Morrar's, daughter, Iltizam, and presented her as a model female nonviolent protestor in the demonstrations against the wall (e.g., Bacha 2010, Beinin 2010). See also Iltizam's profile on the website of Just Vision, an organization that funded and produced a documentary on Budrus (Bacha 2010), at www.justvision.org/portrait/iltezam-morrar.

20. See, among others, Al-Botmeh and Richter-Devroe (2010), Hammami (1997), Jean-Klein (2000), Mabuchi, (2003), Peteet (1991), and Richter-Devroe (2009) for analyses of the mother figure in Palestinian nationalist discourse.

21. See also Collins (2004) and Khalili (2007, 187–213), who show how the international solidarity movement and its focus on grassroots activism has often led to Palestinians performing to international audiences what the latter consider truly "authentic" and "indigenous" Palestinian agency.

22. See Lind (1992) for a similar argument in the context of women's participation in nonviolent social movements in Latin America. See also Joseph (2000) for a critical analysis of gender and citizenship in the Middle East, and Jad, Johnson, and Giacaman (2000) for a study revealing the specificities of gender and citizenship in the Palestinian context of statelessness.

Chapter 3. Women's Everyday Resistance and the Infrapolitics of *Ṣumūd*: "Yes, we came here to enjoy!"

The section in this chapter titled "*ʿAmal*—The Infrapolitics of Hope" draws on an article published in the *Journal of International Women's Studies* (Richter-Devroe 2011). I thank the journal for granting me republishing rights.

1. See Khalili (2007, 99–112) for a comprehensive study of *ṣumūd* as a Palestinian commemorative narrative. Lena Meari (2014), in her study on *ṣumūd* as practiced and narrated by Palestinian political prisoners, defines *ṣumūd* as "a Palestinian relational political-psycho-affective subjectivity" (Meari 2014, 549).

2. More recently the peace and conflict resolution literature has started to look into local and everyday forms of political agency. Yet, limitations of such approaches—sometimes termed developmental peacebuilding—remain. In developmental peacebuilding (e.g., European Commission Humanitarian Office 1996; United Nations 1996) closer attention is paid to wider socioeconomic structures and issues of human security and empowerment, acknowledging that "humanitarian and development assistance . . . may or may not have explicit peacebuilding objectives but will have an effect on the context in which peace negotiations are occurring" (Goodhand 2006, 13). The linking of relief, development, and political ("peace") interventions, however, risks creating a hierarchy of more and less deserving victims (see, e.g., Richmond 2009a, 340), and—more importantly—its focus on local good governance and institutions can deflect attention from the international dimensions of conflict (see Bradbury 1998), particularly geopolitical interests and/or global political economy structures (see Duffield 1998). Developmental peacebuilding thus cannot and should not substitute concrete political engagement by the international community.

3. For a critical discussion on defining everyday resistance, including Scott's conceptualization, see, among others, Rubin (1996), Gutmann (1993), as well as Scott's (1993) reply to Gutmann.

4. For works that foreground the everyday in peace and conflict studies, see also Richmond and Mitchell (2011) and Richmond and Franks (2011).

5. See, for example, contributions and analyses in Teefelen (2007) where the concept of *ṣumūd* is predominantly related to the search for hope, joy and a normal life.

6. For studies analyzing, but also interrogating, this association between *ṣumūd* and femininity, see, for example, Johnson (2007, 602–3), Peteet (1991, 153), and Richter-Devroe (2008, 47–51, and 2011).

7. At that time, *ṣumūd* was understood and practiced as an informal, individual, and ad-hoc politics, largely practiced and supported by the older generation through their charitable and relief work. In such informal resistance and relief work, the imagery of the peasant mother as protector and nurturer of the dispersed nation was

glorified, especially by some women's charitable organizations (e.g., The Society of Inash Al Usra).

8. For other socio-anthropological analyses that trace the everydayness of Israeli settler-colonial violence and control in Palestine, and Palestinian's resistance and coping strategies in this context, see, for example, Kelly (2008) and Allen (2008).

9. Rosenfeld (2004) provides an in-depth ethnographic study of women's and men's dynamics of work, education, and resistance in Dheishe Refugee Camp in Bethlehem for the period 1992–96.

10. See Johnson (2007) for a study on Palestinian women's household and coping strategies after 2000 in al-Amari Refugee Camp, and the contributions in Taraki (2006), in particular Kuttab (2006), for a comprehensive gendered analysis of household survival strategies, women's work, and transformations of family and kin structures in Palestine as a result of the Israeli occupation.

11. See Singerman (1995, 132–72) for a detailed treatment of women's informal networks among the popular classes in urban quarters in Cairo, highlighting their political, economic, and social significance.

12. Other resistance scholars have also relaxed the links between consciousness, agency, and change so as to include in definitions of resistance also actions that might trigger unintended transformations (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1986/2000; Rothenberg 2004). For a broader discussion on intentionality in everyday resistance see Ortner (1995) and Sivaramakrishnan (2005).

13. Various studies have shown the interrelationship between political and patriarchal violence, arguing that patriarchal control has risen in Palestine as a result of the occupation. See, for example, Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009), World Bank (2010), as well as Muhanna and Qleibo (2009), whose study focuses on the situation in Gaza.

14. Kandiyoti (1991) analyzes and conceptualizes the "patriarchal bargain" as an arrangement whereby women comply to socially set and expected modesty codes in exchange for men fulfilling their normative role as breadwinners. She finds that while this arrangement holds in place patriarchal gender hierarchies, the demise of the "patriarchal bargain" through the intrusion of global capital does not result in women's increased freedom or empowerment, but rather strengthens social conservatism. In Palestine, the patriarchal bargain has been unsettled primarily by the Israeli occupation and its military, political, and economic intrusions, but the related neoliberalization of the Palestinian economy also has played its role.

15. This quotation also appears in the first epigraph to the introduction.

16. Statistics on Palestinian casualties during the attack on Gaza in 2008–9 vary. The Goldstone report finds that the estimates by nongovernmental organizations putting the number of casualties between 1387 and 1417 are most consistent (United Nations 2009, 10–11).

17. See, for example, Elia Suleiman's film *The Time That Remains* (2010) for a semiautobiographical work that portrays Palestinian history since 1948 through

distance, irony, and black humor. For a discussion of how resistance against the occupation is treated in Palestinian cultural production, see Salih and Richter-Devroe (2014a) and the other articles on Palestine that appear in the special issue of the *Arab Studies Journal*, "Special Issue: Cultures of Resistance" (Salih and Richter-Devroe 2014b).

18. For more recent studies that deal with Palestinian's everyday resistance on the ideational level see, for example, Allen (2008), Hammami (2004), Johnson (2007), Junka (2006), Kelly (2008), Meari (2014), Richter-Devroe (2011), and Teefelen (2007).

19. Bayat (2007) explains that controlling fun and pleasure is a political act, and not specific to Islamic groups. Illustrating his argument with the example from a secular setting where militants from the al-Aqsa Martyr Brigade interrupted a music concert in Nablus claiming that joy and entertainment would disrupt public commitment to the cause and to (the brigade's understanding and practice of) resistance, Bayat (2007, 456) concludes that the "militias' apprehension of 'happiness' follows the same logic of power—fear from a rival frame of mind that could ultimately undercut their authority."

Conclusion: Reclaiming Humanity and the Politics of Women's Everyday Life in Occupied Palestine

1. See also Meari, who argues that Palestinian prisoners, by practicing *ṣumūd* during interrogation and not confessing to their interrogators, refuse to recognize colonial power structures and thus resist colonial subjectification. Meari describes this as "constant movements of unmaking and remaking the self, the continuous process of desubjectivation that Palestinians generate through this practice" (2014, 548). For other sociological and anthropological analyses of the Palestinian everyday which support these findings, see Allen (2008), Hammami (2004), Johnson (2007), Junka (2006), Kelly (2008), Meari (2014), Richter-Devroe (2011), and Teefelen (2007).

2. My categorization is specific to time (post-Oslo) and place (the West Bank and East Jerusalem). In other Palestinian settings, constructions of political femininities might differ. See, for example, R. Sayigh's (2007b) differentiation between Palestinian refugee women's "self-stereotypes" of "struggle personality," "confrontation personality," and "all our life is tragedy" collected through life stories in Shatila camp in the late 1990s.

3. It is important to note that Arendt in other works, for example, in *The Human Condition* (Arendt 2013), adopts a narrow definition of what constitutes the political and political agency. She bases her conceptualization on the ancient Greek model of the *polis*, and thus explicitly draws a distinction between the public life of politics and the private nonpolitical life in the family and home where women, children, and slaves operate. I do not adopt—as shown and argued throughout the

book—this definition of the political, but rather rely here on her understanding and critical analysis of the international system based on nation-states (and necessarily statelessness) with the aim of better understanding the ways in which the political takes shape for and is enacted by the stateless.

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